

POST-SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS: BREAST REDUCTION or LIFT

Patient Name _____

Date _____

Surgery Date _____

Once your surgery is completed, you must follow all the instructions given to you in order to heal properly and have a good outcome.

The following instructions are your obligation. Use this as a checklist of progress as you heal. Included are normal post-surgical experiences and key health considerations that may be a cause of concern.

TYPICAL POST-OPERATIVE SYMPTOMS

Typical symptoms of breast surgery; and signs to watch for following breast reduction surgery include the following:

Tightness in the chest region and stiffness; Tingling, burning or intermittent shooting pain: These are normal experiences as the skin, tissues and sensory nerves heal. Pain medication will help you cope with any discomfort. If you have drains, you may experience additional localized discomfort. Drains are general removed the next day after your surgery, at which time Dr. Gartside can review instructions with you and answer any questions about the surgery.

Hypersensitivity of nipples or lack of sensitivity: This is normal and will gradually resolve over time. You may also experience a small amount of fluid or milk seeping through the nipples.

Shiny skin or any itchy feeling: Swelling can cause the breast's skin to appear shiny. As the healing process advances, you may also find a mild to severe itchy feeling of the breasts. An antihistamine like Benadryl can help to alleviate severe, constant itchiness. A moisturizer to the skin will also help. Use anything you would normally. Examples are Vaseline Intensive Care or Oil of Olay, etc. **If the skin becomes red and hot to the touch, contact our office immediately.**

Asymmetry, the breasts will look slightly different, or heal differently: Breasts may look or feel quite different from one another in the days following surgery. This is normal; no two breasts are perfectly symmetrical in nature or following surgery.

Constipation frequently occurs as a result of a reduction in your activities. Stool softeners such as Colace (available over-the-counter at your pharmacy) and bulk former such as Metamucil or Miralax may be started prior to surgery to normalize your bowel habits. If you need it, Milk of Magnesia is a gentle laxative. If problem persists, then a Docolax suppository may be need.

To alleviate any discomfort, and to reduce swelling, you may apply cool, not cold compresses to the treated region. Crushed ice or ice packs must be wrapped in a towel before being applied to the skin. Do not apply ice or anything frozen directly to the skin. Apply cool compresses, for no longer than 20-minute intervals.

CALL THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- **A high fever, (over 101°) severe nausea and vomiting, continued dizziness or incoherent behavior, such as hallucinations.**
- **Any pain that cannot be controlled by your pain medication.**
- **Bright red skin that is hot to the touch.**

- **Excessive bleeding or fluid seeping through the incisions. (It is very common to have an open area at the T under the breasts that will ooze. Simply keep clean with a pad. This occurs usually one to two weeks after your surgery.)**
- **A severely misshapen breast or bruising that is localized to one breast or region of the chest.**

DAY OF SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS

You will only be released to the care of a responsible adult. All of these instructions must be clear to the adult who will monitor your health and support you, around the clock in the first 24 hours following surgery.

_____ **Rest, but not bed rest:** While rest is important in the early stages of healing, equally important is that you are ambulatory: meaning that you are walking under your own strength. Spend 10 minutes every 2 hours while awake engaged in light walking indoors as you recover.

_____ **Recline with your head and chest slightly elevated above your lower body.**

_____ **Good nutrition:** Fluids are critical following surgery. You must consume at least 8 ounces of fluid every 2 hours. Stick with soft, bland, nutritious food for the first 24 hours.

_____ **Take all medication, exactly as prescribed**

_____ **Change your incision dressings.** This does not start until after drains are removed or when instructed. Your incisions will seep fluid and some blood for a short time after surgery. Keep dressings clean and dry. Do not remove any steri-strips over your stitches until instructed. Use sanitary pads for dressings inside your bra as needed.

_____ **After the first dressing change wear a supportive bra around the clock. Any bra you are comfortable in that does not hurt.** We recommend a light sports bra with built in cups

_____ **Do not smoke.** Smoking can greatly impair your safety prior to surgery and your ability to heal following surgery. You must not smoke.

_____ **Relax.** Do not engage in any stressful activities. Do not lift anything heavier than a paperback book. Take care of no one, and let others tend to you.

YOUR FIRST WEEK FOLLOWING SURGERY

During this time you will progress with each day that passes. Ease into your daily activities. You will receive clearance to begin driving or return to work at your post-operative visit.

- **Continue to cleanse wounds as directed; you may shower starting right after the drains are removed.** Take a warm, not hot shower. Do not take a bath. Limit your shower to 10 minutes. Do not remove any steri-strips. Do not rub your incisions. Apply a fragrance free moisturizer to breast and surrounding skin, however not on your incisions.
- **Take medications and supplements as directed.** Take pain medication only as needed. You may wish to switch from prescription pain medication to acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- **Continue to wear your bra around the clock.**
- **Do not resume any exercise other than regular walking.** Walking is essential every day to prevent the formation of blood clots.

- **Maintain a healthy diet. Do not smoke. Do not consume alcohol while using narcotics.**

BETWEEN ONE to FOUR WEEKS FOLLOWING SURGERY

As you resume your normal daily activities, you must continue proper care and healing.

- **Continue your wound care as directed.** It is common to experience a small dime size area at the T under the breast. Simply keep it clean with a small pad and change as needed.
- **Refrain from weight-bearing exercise, twisting or lifting anything heavy over your head. You may raise arm over your head and use your arms for routine care of yourself.** No tennis, golf, softball or other sports with similar swinging motions. Avoid aerobic exercise that may cause a lot of bounce. You may begin range of motion exercises but not with any weight, pressure or resistance of any kind.
- **Do not smoke.** While incisions may have sealed, smoking deprives your body of necessary oxygen that can result in poorly healed, wide, raised scars.
- **Continue to wear a proper support bra.** The bra you first wore following surgery may feel somewhat loose. You may replace it with any bra you feel comfortable in and does not hurt. You may sleep without a bra; however a camisole with built-in shelf support can be comfortable and provides added support as you continue to heal.
- **You may sleep flat.** However do not sleep on your stomach. If you are a side sleeper, a soft pillow under your mid-back and shoulders may offer more comfort and support than a single pillow under your head.
- **Practice good sun protection.** Do not expose your breasts to direct sunlight. If you are outdoors, apply at least an SPF 30 to the chest area at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. Your chest region and breast skin are highly susceptible to sunburn or the formation of irregular, darkened pigmentation.

FOUR TO SIX WEEKS FOLLOWING SURGERY

Healing will progress and your breasts will settle into a more final shape and position over the next 6 weeks.

- **You may ease into your regular fitness routine.** However realize that your upper body may require some time to return to prior strength.
- **You may resume wearing under wires,** although these are not necessary.
- **Discomfort or tightness and tingling will resolve.** Any lingering nipple sensitivity or lack of sensation should begin to greatly improve.
- **No need to resume smoking.** You have now gone 10 weeks (4 weeks prior to surgery and 6 weeks following) without a cigarette. For your long-term health, there is no need to resume smoking.

YOUR FIRST YEAR

- **Practice monthly breast self exam.**
- **Continue healthy nutrition, fitness and sun protection.**

- **Your scars will continue to refine.** If they become raised, red or thickened, or appear to widen, contact our office. Early intervention is important to achieving well-healed scars. Scars are generally refined one year after surgery to flat line 1mm to 2mm in width.
- **A one-year post surgery follow-up is recommended.** This is to review you progress, check the scarring and discuss future mammograms. However you may call our office at any time with your concerns or for needed follow-up.

Your body will change with age. The appearance of your breasts will change too. You may wish to undergo revision surgery at a later date to help maintain your appearance throughout life.

Contact our office at **703-742-8004** with any of your questions or concerns, at any time.

I have read and understand all of the above instructions. I understand that following these instructions is solely my responsibility. I understand that it is also my responsibility to ask my doctor and his or her staff any questions I have related to these instructions or about my procedure, health and healing.
