

# Axillary Lymph Node Dissection

- Before you leave the hospital, be sure you have drain dressings and a plastic measuring cup.
- A nurse will teach you how to empty your drains and record the amount of fluid. A visiting nurse will check on your drains when you are at home. When the drainage is less than 30cc's from each drain for 24 hours, they are ready to be removed. Please call your surgeon to make an appointment for drain removal.
- You may shower the day after surgery. You will have a dressing (bandage) over your incision(s). Please remove the dressing 48 hours after surgery. Although some drainage on the dressing is normal and expected, please call if the dressing is soaked with drainage.
- After your dressing has been removed, you can gently wash the incision area and pat it dry. The incisions can stay open to the air, or you can keep gauze over them if you find it more comfortable. Be sure to attach your drains to a belt or necklace made from string so they do not pull out while you wash. Replace drain dressings after showering.
- Under your dressing you will see thin tapes called steri-strips over the incision(s). These can get wet in the shower, but do not scrub them. Pat them dry after you shower.
- Steri-strips should stay on for 1 week. Steri-strips will start to curl off at the ends during that time.
- It is normal to have thickening or firmness in the skin along your incision(s). You may also have tenderness and areas of numbness in the underarm and along the inner part of your upper arm.
- Do **not** shave or use deodorant for 1 week after your drains have been removed. You can shave and use deodorant after 1 week if your incisions have no open areas.
- You may have more pain during the second week after surgery than you did during the first week. This is because a local anesthetic that was injected in your underarm is wearing off.

- Do **not** take aspirin or ibuprofen until your drains have been removed. Tylenol and your prescribed pain medications are okay to use. The prescribed pain medication can cause constipation, so drink plenty of fluids. You may want to take an over-the-counter stool softener such as Colace.<sup>®</sup>
- **Exercises:** Your treatment team will give you a booklet on stretching exercises to do after surgery. These stretching exercises will prevent your arm and shoulder from stiffening up. Do **not** drive or do repetitive arm motions such as vacuuming, washing windows, raking, and swimming until your drains have been removed.
- Please call 617-726-6500 if you have any questions, or if you have bad pain or swelling, fever, or redness extending more than 1/2 inch from an incision.