

# What You Need to Do Before and After Your Breast Surgery with Post-Op Drains

## Instructions Before Surgery

You are scheduled for surgery on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

**Please report to** the Center for Perioperative Care, located on the 3rd floor of the Wang Ambulatory Care Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

**Please report to** Nuclear Medicine, located on the 2nd floor of the White Building at Massachusetts General Hospital, on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

## Medication instructions

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Please tell your surgeon's office about any blood thinning medications you take, such as Coumadin® (warfarin) or Plavix® (clopidogrel) **as soon as possible**. You should talk with your surgeon about **all** prescribed and over-the-counter medications or supplements you take.

Tylenol® is okay to take before surgery.

Hibiclens: Your surgeon may want you to wash with an antimicrobial soap called Hibiclens. You will be given a separate sheet with instructions on how to use Hibiclens.

## Day of surgery instructions

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- Do not eat or drink after 10 pm the night before your surgery.
- If you have to drink the morning of surgery, you may have 8 ounces or less of water.
- Do not drink any water for 4 hours before surgery.
- Do not chew gum, take cough drops, or eat hard candy the morning of surgery.
- Do not wear any jewelry. Remove body piercings.
- Remove nail polish from your index fingers.
- Leave all valuables at home.
- You will need an adult to drive you home after surgery.

Please contact your Primary Care physician for insurance referrals.

If you have any questions, call our surgical scheduler at 617-726-9200.



# Instructions After Surgery – What you need to know about your drains

- Do not leave the hospital without drain dressings and a plastic cup for measuring drainage.
- 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 the dressing you will see thin tapes called steri-strips over your incision(s). These can get wet in the shower, but do not scrub them. Pat them dry after you shower.
- Steri-strips usually stay on for 2 weeks over your breast incision, and 1 week over the underarm incision. Steri-strips will start to curl off at the ends during that time. It is ok if the strips fall off a few days sooner than expected. Remove underarm strips after 1 week, and breast strips after 3 weeks, or allow them to fall off on their own.
- 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.
- For pain, take prescribed pain medication, Tylenol®, or ibuprofen every 4 to 6 hours as needed. If you are taking prescribed pain medication, drink plenty of fluids as they can cause constipation (trouble going to the bathroom). To prevent constipation, you may take an over-the-counter stool softener such as Colace®.



## Activity

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- You will feel more tired than usual, so get plenty of rest.
- Start your stretching exercises 2 days after surgery. The exercises will prevent stiffness in your arm and shoulder.
- Do **not** drive until all drains have been removed.
- Do **not** lift anything heavy (more than 10 pounds), or do repetitive arm motions like raking or vacuuming for 1 week after all drains have been removed.

Your surgeon will call you to talk about the pathology results about 7-10 business days after surgery. Sometimes it can take longer to get the results. Your follow-up appointments will be made after the pathology results are complete.

**Please call if you have:** bad pain, fever of 101 or higher, swelling, or redness extending more than 1/2 inch from an incision, or a drainage-soaked dressing.

You may call the Center for Breast Cancer at 617-726-6500 to speak to a nurse practitioner if you have any concerns or questions.



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