

Discharge Instructions for Prophylactic Mastectomy



You've had a prophylactic mastectomy. It was done to help reduce your risk for breast cancer. Now you need to rest and recover. Give yourself time and try to be patient with your body as it heals. Your healthcare team will teach you what to do at home. You'll learn how to take care of your surgical site and what kind of problems you should watch for.

Here's what you need to do at home after this surgery.

Activity

Be sure you understand what you can and can't do as you recover from surgery:

- Rest when you are tired. Don't worry if you are extremely tired (fatigued). Fatigue and weakness are normal for a few weeks. This will get better over time.
- Ask your friends or family to help with chores and errands while you recover.
- Don't lift anything that weighs more than 5 pounds until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Don't do any strenuous activities, such as mowing the lawn, using a vacuum cleaner, working out, or playing sports. Listen to your body. If an activity causes pain, stop.
- Don't drive until you are free of pain and no longer taking prescription pain medicine. This may take a few weeks.
- Do the range-of-motion exercises that you learned in the hospital.
- Limit your activity to short walks. Slowly increase your pace and distance as you feel able.

Other home care

Here are suggestions for taking care of yourself at home:

- Take pain medicine as directed. Ask about side effects it could cause and what you can do to manage them.
- If advised by your surgeon, don't remove the bandage on the cut (incision) until your follow-up appointment. Keep your bandage and cuts clean and dry. Check them daily for signs of infection, like redness, swelling, and drainage. Also watch the edges of the incisions to be sure they're not opening up.
- Empty your drain tube as directed. You may have a thin, flexible drainage tube in your chest near the incision. The tube carries excess fluid to a soft plastic bulb. You will be shown how and when to empty the fluid. You may be asked to record the amount of fluid. The amount of fluid will decrease over time.
- Wash your incisions gently in the shower after the bandage is removed and if your healthcare provider says it's OK. Use mild soap and warm water. Pat dry.
- Don't soak in a tub, hot tub, or pool until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Return to your normal diet as you feel able. Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- Try to prevent constipation: Eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day, unless directed otherwise. Use a laxative or a mild stool softener if your healthcare provider says it's OK.

Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by your healthcare provider. You may also want to make an appointment to talk to someone about reconstructive surgery or breast prostheses.

When to call your healthcare provider

Talk to your healthcare provider about problems you should watch for. Call right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever above 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Chills
- Cough or shortness of breath
- Signs of infection around the incisions, such as redness, drainage, warmth, and pain
- Increasing pain in or around your incision
- The incision edges open up.
- Any unusual bleeding or bleeding that soaks the bandage
- Swelling in your hand, arm, or chest that gets worse or is not getting better a week or two after surgery
- Trouble passing urine or changes in how your urine looks or smells
- Pain, redness, swelling, or warmth in an arm or leg
- The drain tube falls out (if placed during surgery)
- Any other concerns

Know what problems to watch for and when you need to call your healthcare provider. Also be sure you know what number to call to get help after office hours and on weekends and holidays.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions
This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.