

After LICAP Flap Breast Reconstruction: Self-care at Home

What to expect and how to prepare

This handout explains what to expect, how to prepare, and how to plan for your recovery after lumpectomy with LICAP reconstruction.

What Is LICAP?

The LICAP, or *lateral intercostal artery perforator flap*, is a method of reconstructing the breast. The procedure uses skin and fat from the side of the chest, near the armpit. It is used to reconstruct breast defects following lumpectomy.

Incision, Care, and Healing

- You may receive a surgical bra. If so, wear the surgical bra 24 hours a day for 4 weeks after your surgery. Only take it off to wash it or to do daily hygiene.
- Remove the outermost dressing on your breast 48 hours after surgery. Do this before you shower for the first time. If your incision has thin strips of Steri-Strips (white tape) over it, leave them on until they fall off. If the Steri-Strips are still on when you come to the clinic for your first follow-up visit, your provider will remove them.
- You may experience numbness at your surgical site for 4 weeks or longer. Your breast may be bruised and swollen.

Drains

If you have drains placed at the time of surgery, we will teach you how to care for them. Please read the handout “Closed Bulb Drain Care: For a Jackson-Pratt (JP) or Blake drain” to learn more.

Hygiene

- Please take a shower 48 hours after surgery. We recommend daily showers to reduce the risk of infection.
- Use mild soap and wash your incisions very gently.

- Do not take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming until your incisions are fully healed and no scabs remain. This may take 4 to 6 weeks.

Activities and Return to Work

For **4 weeks**, move your arms gently:

- Do not raise your arm above shoulder height on your surgical side.
- Do not lift, push, or pull anything that weighs more than 8 pounds (about the weight of a gallon of water). This includes children and pets.
- Avoid repetitive arm movements such as chores (vacuuming, doing dishes, and laundry).
- Avoid aerobic exercise (activities that cause heavy breathing or sustained elevated heart rate).
- Walking is encouraged, helpful for healing, and rebuilding strength. Start with 3 to 4 walks a day for 5 to 10 minutes each. Gradually increase your distance and length of time as you heal.
- Return to work varies from person to person and depends on the type of work you do. Please discuss with your surgeon what may be best for you.

Sleep Position

- Sleep on your non-surgical side or on your back for 4 weeks after surgery.
- Sleep with your head slightly raised. It may be helpful to stack pillows or use a wedge pillow. You may also sleep in a recliner to keep your head raised.

Pain Control

- Please read the handout “Pain Control After Reconstructive Surgery.”
- Please do not use ice or heat directly on your surgical site(s).

When to Contact the Care Team

Call your care team **immediately** if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing (hold pressure on the site to lessen bleeding)
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and/or chills
- Any signs of infection at your surgical site
 - Redness
 - Increased swelling
 - Bad-smelling drainage
- Pus or cloudy, colored drainage
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- New rash
- Pain that is worsening and is no longer helped by your pain medicine.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

During Clinic Hours (Monday through Friday except holidays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.):

If you have any questions or concerns, we recommend messaging your surgeon through EPIC MyChart. Please include a photo if it would help explain your concern.

Or, you may call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217 option 2.

Urgent Needs Outside of Clinic Hours:

If you have an urgent care need after hours, on weekends, or holidays, please call 206.598.6190 and ask to speak to the plastic surgeon on call.

If you are experiencing redness, swelling, pain/cramp, or warmth, usually in one limb, this may be signs of a blood clot. Please go to your local ER.