

# Breast Reduction or Mastopexy

## *What to expect and how to prepare*

*This handout explains what to expect and how to plan for your recovery after breast reduction or mastopexy.*

### What is breast reduction?

*Breast reduction* is a surgery to make your breast lighter and smaller. This is done by removing fat, glandular breast tissue, and excess skin. A breast reduction may be used to cover a defect after breast cancer surgery. This is called an *oncoplastic reduction*.

### What is mastopexy?

*Mastopexy* is surgery to reposition your breast so it is higher on your chest. It is also called a “breast lift.”

### Mammogram

Ask your provider whether you need a mammogram before your surgery.

### Incision Care, Drainage, and Healing

- Wear the surgical bra that was given to you 24 hours a day for 4 weeks after your surgery. You can remove it for showering and laundering. This bra should be very snug but not painful. You may layer 2 bras if more support is needed.
- Remove the outermost dressing on your breast(s) 48 hours after surgery. Do this before you shower for the first time. If your incision has thin strips of white tape (Steri-Strips) over it, leave them in place until they fall off. If the Steri-Strips are still in place when you come to the clinic for your first follow-up visit, your provider will remove them.
- Some drainage is normal. If you have drainage from your incisions, cover the area with dry gauze or a panty liner.
- Your nipple and breast may feel numb for 4 weeks or longer. Your breast may be bruised and swollen. Please **do not** use ice or heat on your breasts.

### Drains

You may have had drains placed during surgery. Please refer to the handout, "Caring for Your JP Drain" for care instructions.

## Hygiene

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

## Activity and Return to Work

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

- 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.
- Do not lift your arms over your head.
- Avoid repetitive arm movements such as chores (vacuuming and washing dishes).
- Sleep on your back with your torso elevated to reduce swelling. You may prop pillows up behind your back to elevate your upper body. Avoid *aerobic exercise* (activities that cause heavy breathing or sustained elevated heart rate).
- We encourage walking because it is 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.
- Returning 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.

## When to Contact Your Care Team

### Call the clinic nurse 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 getting worse and is no longer eased 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 sending a message to 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 new chest pain or shortness of breath, please call 911.**

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