

# 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.*

## About Your Surgery

*Breast reduction* is a surgery to make your breast(s) lighter and smaller. This is done by removing fat, breast tissue, and extra skin. Sometimes this is done to help your breasts look more natural after breast cancer surgery. This is called an *oncoplastic reduction*.

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

Ask your provider whether you need a *mammogram* (breast X-ray) before your surgery.

## Incision Care, Drainage, and Healing

- We will give you a surgical bra before you go home from the hospital. Wear this 24 hours a day for 4 weeks after your surgery. You can take it off to clean it, and when you shower. This bra should be very snug but not painful. If you need more support you can wear 2 bras.
- Remove the bandage 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 on when you come to the clinic for your first follow-up visit, your provider will remove them.
- Some drainage (fluid) 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 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.



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## Activity and Return to Work

For **4 weeks** after your surgery:

- 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.
- Move your arms very gently:
  - Do not raise your arms above shoulder level to the front or the side.
  - Do not reach behind you.
  - Do not push or pull anything.
  - Avoid repetitive arm movements such as chores (vacuuming and washing dishes).
  - Avoid reaching over your head.
- Sleep on your back. Elevate (lift) your upper body while you sleep to reduce swelling. You may prop up pillows behind your back to elevate your upper body.
- 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.
- Avoid *aerobic exercise* (activities that cause heavy breathing or sustained elevated heart rate).
- 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 help with 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 or vomiting
- New rash
- Pain that is getting worse and is no longer helped by pain medicine

**If you have new chest pain or shortness of breath, please call 911.**

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

### 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.