

Recovery and Going Home



My Recovery Planner

Instructions: Add today's date (1st day after surgery) in the appropriate day of the week on the first row of your calendar and then mark the discharge date you have been given. You will likely have follow-up appointments after discharge. Mark your follow-up appointments on the calendar.

*The first day AFTER surgery is DAY #1. For example, if surgery is on Monday, Day #1 is Tuesday.
Most patients go home on DAY #3 – use following discharge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Use the following table after discharge

*Your surgical team will decide which pain medication will be best for you

Day #__ Medication Checklist for Home	
Acetaminophen 1000 mg (Tylenol) every 6 hours	Time Taken
Dose #1	:
Dose #2	:
Dose #3	:
Dose #4	:
Pain pill: Tramadol (Ultram) OR Oxycodone every 4 hours if needed*	
Dose #1	:
Dose #2	:
Dose #3	:
Dose #4	:
Dose #5	:
Dose #6	:
Nerve pain medicine: Gabapentin (Neurontin) every 8 hours if needed	
Dose #1	:
Dose #2	:
Dose #3	:
Anti-Inflammatory (Ibuprofen OR Celecoxib) every 6 to 8 hours if needed	
Dose #1	:
Dose #2	:
Dose #3	:
Dose #4	:
Tylenol 1000 mg (every 6 to 8 hours as directed)	
Dose #1	:
Dose #2	:
Dose #3	:
Dose #4	:
Laxative (if needed)	
Dose #1	:
Dose #2	:
Stool Softener (if needed)	
Dose #1	:
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Surgical Dressing

Most of the time, you will not have a dressing in place. Your incision is sealed with “skin glue.” If you also have Steri-Strips, leave them on until they fall off naturally. You may wash your incision with soap and water in the shower and then pat dry once a day.

Surgical Drains

During your surgery, your surgeon will place surgical drains. The drains will “pull” extra tissue fluid from the wound and allow the body to “close” and heal. The drainage will be bloody at first, and may turn a pink, yellow, or orange color. Sometimes you will see blood clots or bits of tissue in the fluid, **this is normal**. You will have the drain(s) about 1 to 3 weeks, sometimes longer, depending on how much fluid is draining. **NEVER** take a bath, use a swimming pool, or go in a hot tub while you have a drain in place.

Emptying and Recording Your Drainage (step-by step)

1. Wash your hands.
2. Strip the drain tubing – this keeps blood clots from blocking the tubing.
3. Open the drain cap and pour the drainage in the measuring cup.
4. Squeeze the bulb while closing the cap – this maintains suction.
5. Record the amount of drainage (mL or cc units) for each drain on the record sheet (page 30).
6. Pour the drainage in the toilet and rinse the measuring cup with water. **NEVER** rinse your drain with water, this may cause infection.
7. Wash your hands.

How often do I Empty the Drain?

The first 24 hours after surgery:

- Strip and empty the drain(s) every 8 hours or as needed if the bulbs fill more than halfway.

After the first 24 hours:

- Strip and empty the drain(s) twice a day. If the drain becomes more than half full, you should empty it more often.

- You should monitor the drain site for signs of infection including warmth around the site, white or yellow drainage. If you notice these signs, call your surgeon's office.

Drain Removal

The drain can be removed by one of the surgery team members when output is ***less than 30 mL for a 24-hour period for two to three days in a row.*** Drain removal is a simple procedure and takes less than a minute. Some patients do not feel the drain coming out, while others have brief burning and discomfort.

Drainage Record

Name:			Date of Surgery:	
Date:	Time:	If more than one drain, which one:	Drainage Amount (per drain)	Total Amount (per drain; in 24 hours)

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Protect Your Flap

- Try to sleep in a recliner to avoid laying on your flap.
- **DO NOT** lay on your sides or stomach for **6 weeks** after surgery.
- If flap tissue came from your buttock, for the **first 1-2 weeks**, do not bend your hips more than 90 degrees (do not sit upright in a chair; however, you may be in a recliner chair lying flat with a few pillows, or be standing straight up) and avoid crossing your legs to promote healing of your incision.
- If flap tissue came from your abdomen, for the **first 1-2 weeks**, bend your knees and use a bent posture while standing or walking, and place a pillow under your knees while lying down to promote healing of your incision.
- **Do not smoke** or be around second-hand smoke after surgery (this constricts blood vessels and impairs healing).
- **AVOID** using ice packs and heating pads – your skin will be numb, so you could get frost-bite or burns.

While at Home: Post-Surgery 9-Week Time Table

Legend:

- X = activities you *can* do
- * = things you can do after drains are removed
- ** = things you can do when no longer taking medications
- *** = involves heavy lifting
- **** = if instructed to do so by your healthcare team

Activity	72 hours post-surgery	Week #1	Week #2	Week #3	Week #4
Take a shower?	X	X	X	X	X
Walk up and down stairs?	X	X	X	X	X
Begin physical therapy?			X*	X*	X*
Drink caffeine?					
Eat chocolate?					
Lift, push, or pull 10 pounds?					
Stand straight?					****
Travel by car?	X	X	X	X	X
Travel by plane?					X****
Lay on my side?					X*
Continue physical therapy?				X*	X*
Lift my arms above shoulder level?		X	X	X	X
Take NSAIDS (Ibuprofen, Advil)	X	X	X	X	X
Wear a bra? (loose fitting, no wire)	X****	X****	X****	X****	X****
Engage in sexual activity?					
Drive?				X**	X**
Return to work?					X****
Lay flat while sleeping?					X
Engage in strenuous exercise?					
Do abdominal exercises?					
Drink alcohol?	When you are no longer taking pain medicines****				

While at Home: Post-Surgery 9-Week Time Table

Legend:

- Boxes with an X are activities you **can** do
- * after drains are removed
- ** when no longer taking medications
- *** longer if work involves heavy lifting
- **** if instructed to do so by your healthcare team

Activity	Week #5	Week #6	Week #7	Week #8	Week #9
Take a shower?	X	X	X	X	X
Walk up and down stairs?	X	X	X	X	X
Begin physical therapy?	X*	X	X	X	X
Drink caffeine?	X	X	X	X	X
Eat chocolate?	X	X	X	X	X
Lift, push or pull 10 pounds?		X	X	X	X
Stand straight?	X	X	X	X	X
Travel by car?	X	X	X	X	X
Travel by plane?	X	X	X	X	X
Lay on my side?	X	X	X	X	X
Continue physical therapy?	X*	X	X	X	X
Lift my arms above shoulder level?	X	X	X	X	X
Take Ibuprofen, Advil or aspirin	X	X	X	X	X
Wear a bra?	X	X	X	X	X
Engage in sexual activity?		X	X	X	X
Drive?	X	X	X	X	X
Return to work?	X***	X***	X	X	X
Lay flat while sleeping?	X	X	X	X	X
Engage in strenuous exercise?		X****	X	X	X
Do abdominal exercises?		X****	X	X	X
Drink alcohol?	When you are no longer taking pain medications****				
Expose surgical incisions to sun?	Six months after surgery				

Concerns After Discharge



Once you are Discharged



Call us at any time if you are worried about your recovery.

During regular office hours (8:00 am - 4:00 pm) call your surgeon's office.

After hours, call 410-955-5000 and ask for the provider on call for your surgeon.

Call us immediately for the following:

- Signs of infection – fever, chills, redness, warmth, swelling, pain, and unusual drainage.
- Severe pain not relieved by pain medicine.
- Excessive bleeding or bruising.
- Nausea for more than 24 hours.
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- Change in the flap site including swelling or breakdown of tissue.
- Problems with the surgical drains (sudden increase or decrease in drainage)

It is generally easier to reach someone between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm, so call early if you think something is not right. A nurse or nurse practitioner is available every day to answer your questions. After hours and on the weekends, the calls go to the resident doctors in the hospital. It may take longer for your phone call to be returned during this time.

If you have a true emergency, such as severe abdominal pain, chest pain, shortness of breath, or any other acute issues, call 911 and go to the local emergency room. Have them contact our team once you are stable.

Activity after Surgery

- Slowly return to your regular diet, avoid fried and fatty foods for the first 24 hours. **Avoid** caffeine and chocolate until instructed by your surgeon.
- You may feel lightheaded while sitting or standing. If this happens move slowly and drink plenty of fluids (water is great).
- Slowly return to your normal activities. You should walk at least 3 times daily. You can do this and climb steps immediately after surgery. Fatigue is normal, it may take 4 to 8 weeks before you feel yourself again. Cluster your activities and rest when needed.
- **Do not drink alcohol** while taking pain medication.

Post-op Appointments and Consults

During the weeks after surgery you will meet with members of your breast reconstruction team, including the:

- **Residents and/or Fellows**
- **Plastic Surgeon**
- **Physician Assistants**
- **Nurses**

Although we do our best to coordinate these clinic appointments for you, it is your responsibility to make sure that you see these clinicians for follow-up. You will meet with **the plastic surgery team's nurse practitioner or nurse** 7-10 days after your surgery to check your wound healing and to manage your surgical drains.

- This appointment should already be scheduled for you and you will receive notification in your preoperative packet.
- If you need to reschedule this appointment, or do not receive notification, please call (443) 997-9466 to schedule.
- You will follow-up with your plastic surgeon 4-6 weeks after your surgery. When ready, they will begin expansion (filling) of the tissue expander.

Coping

People have a variety of emotions when diagnosed with breast cancer – anger, hope, depression, a sense of empowerment, anxiety. They also cope in different ways – time with family and friends, time alone, humor, prayer, communion with nature, meditation, journaling, art and music.

443-997-8282 Ask for –

https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/breast_center/treatments_services/support_services/one_on_one_support.html

Some patients find it helpful to connect with another cancer survivor. Please ask us if this is something you would like to do and we will identify someone to match you with a Johns Hopkins Breast Center Survivor Volunteer. Social workers, counselors, and community support groups are also available to help

patients and family members. A cancer diagnosis can also bring challenges of a financial or practical nature. There are a number of groups and resources which can help with meals, transportation, and costs for medication. Check with one of the Breast Center staff.

Notes – write down any questions you may want to ask your health care team:

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Plastic Surgery Department Contacts

For medical assistance during normal business hours:	
Contact the plastic surgery nurses	443.287.2083 443.997.1553
For medical assistance after normal business or holiday hours:	
Have the plastic surgery resident on call paged	410.955.5000
For administrative assistance - Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) paperwork, records, surgery date:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Michele Manahan	410.955.9472
<input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Gedge Rosson	410.955.9477
<input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Justin Sacks	410.955.6607
<input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Damon Cooney	443.990.0010
<input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Kristen Broderick	410.550.0407
<input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Oluseyi Aliu	443.287.6012
For appointments:	
To cancel, schedule, or reschedule with any member of the plastic surgery team	443.997.9466

