



DARTMOUTH-HITCHCOCK
MEDICAL CENTER

Breast Reduction

*Instructions for Before and After
Surgery*

Preparing for Surgery:

- Please read the ASPS booklet or office brochure before your surgery. If you did not receive one in the mail, ask the nurse for a booklet during your consultation appointment.
- We recommend going to the following website: **www.breasthealthonline.com**. This website was created by women who have had breast reduction surgery. We will include some of their suggestions in this brochure.
- **Women over 40:** Since you should not have a mammogram for 6 months after surgery, you should schedule one within 6 months before surgery.
- Stop tobacco use and avoid being around anyone who smokes for at least 1 month before and 2 weeks after surgery. Smoking can impair wound healing and lead to infection. Due to a strong risk for delayed healing, we will test your blood the day of your surgery to test for byproducts of smoking. If the test is positive, your surgery will be cancelled.

If you are using a nicotine patch, please stop 2 days before surgery and for 5 days after surgery.

- Stop taking aspirin and ibuprofen products 14 days before your surgery and for at least 2 days after your surgery, unless otherwise directed. These products thin your blood and may increase bleeding.

Other blood thinning products to avoid are:

- Vitamin E
- Ginkgo Biloba
- Garlic supplements
- St. John's Wort

Continue to take your prescribed medications unless otherwise advised by your doctor. If you have questions about your medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

- To be safe please take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) only for pain relief in the 2 weeks before your surgery.
- Arrange for a support person to help you after surgery with the following:
 - ⇒ To fill your prescriptions
 - ⇒ Receive instructions for your care
 - ⇒ Drive you home and stay with you for at least the first 24 hours after surgery
 - ⇒ Bring you back to the clinic within 3 days for your first post op visit

- Your doctor will determine if you need an appointment with Pre-Admission Testing prior to surgery. If you do, an appointment will be made for you.
- The Same Day Surgery nurses will call you between 3-6 PM the day before surgery with the time of your surgery. You will be instructed not to eat anything after midnight. Clear fluids are allowed after midnight until 3 hours before your surgery.
- Shower the night before and the morning of surgery with Dial or Lever 2000. Take special care to wash your chest and underarms. **Do not** apply deodorant, powder, or lotion.
- **Do not** wear any jewelry or nail polish. Sculptured nails may have to be clipped for monitoring purposes.
- The Same Day Surgery nurses will give you a surgical bra to wear home after surgery. You will receive a second bra at your 2 week follow-up visit with your doctor. If you want a 3rd bra, you can buy a similar looking sports bra at a department store or online.

Wear your bra 24 hours a day for 6 weeks after surgery. You may remove the bra to shower or for washing. After 6 weeks, you may wear any bra you want, as long as it has no underwire. **Do not** buy underwire bras for 3 months from the day of surgery.

Helpful Preparation Hints:

- ✓ Make sure items like milk, juice and water are in small containers. Gallon and half gallon containers will be too heavy for you to lift.
- ✓ Have pre-made dinners on hand so you can cook them in the microwave.
- ✓ Prepare foods high in protein such as meat, poultry, fish, and eggs. Eating more protein will help you heal at a faster rate, as will adding dark green vegetables.
- ✓ Have crackers or pretzels on hand to eat with your medication or if you have an upset stomach.
- ✓ Use paper plates and plastic cups so you do not need to wash dishes.
- ✓ Bring items down from high shelves so you do not have to reach. Bring up items on low shelves so you do not need to bend down.
- ✓ Plan to wear button-down shirts, loose pants, and slip-on shoes, as it will be difficult to raise your arms or bend at the waist.
- ✓ Have your night clothes, slippers, dressing supplies, and medications set up and ready for when you come home. Have a phone in easy reach, as well as remote controls and reading material.

- ✓ Try to have someone available to run to the store for you. Driving can be hazardous the first week or two and while you are taking narcotics. Your range of motion may be limited and you may not be able to react quickly enough in response to a dog running into the road or a car cutting you off.

Items to have on hand:

Some supplies which may be helpful during your recovery are:

- ◆ Flexible neck straw
- ◆ A gentle laxative
- ◆ Thermometer
- ◆ Slip on shoes
- ◆ Several house robes
- ◆ A pillow to use under your seat belt
- ◆ High protein foods
- ◆ Antibacterial soap
- ◆ Aquaphor ointment
- ◆ Extra gauze or nursing pads
- ◆ Paper tape
- ◆ A list of phone numbers / emergency contacts for your helpers

Day of Surgery:

- Your support person can wait in the surgery waiting room. He/she should plan on waiting between 3-5 hours.
- Your surgery normally takes 2 hours.
- Occasionally, patients need to spend the night at the hospital due to nausea or pain. However, the majority of patients go home in 3-5 hours following surgery.

Following Surgery:

The healing process after breast reduction surgery varies with each person. You should expect to feel tired for the first 2-3 weeks due to anesthesia and the healing process. Rest often during the day and get a good nights sleep.

- With any surgery there is some discomfort or pain. We will prescribe pain medication, usually a narcotic and an anti-inflammatory. Take both as prescribed and **only as needed**. Please read your “Narcotic Use and Post Op Pain” handout for proper use of your pain medications.
- Shooting pain and burning sensations are normal and will subside as you heal.
- Breast swelling is normal, as is mild bruising.
- Expect to have some pink, red, or clear drainage from your incisions for the first 1-2 weeks. Continue to use gauze dressings until the drainage is gone.
- Spitting sutures: Occasionally an area of redness and tenderness develops where a dissolving stitch becomes irritated and pushes to the surface. This stitch is clear or white and looks like fish line. If this occurs, it is not an emergency. You may clip the stitch or call the clinic for an appointment with the nurse.
- Your breasts will take about 6 months to acquire their new shape.

Getting a good nights sleep

Your surgeon may ask you to sleep on your back for several weeks. Here are some suggestions for a good nights sleep.

- Try sleeping in your recliner chair
- Have extra pillows in your bed for support: two along your sides and one under your knees to keep you on your back and to relieve lower back pressure. Buy a large “body pillow” or a pillow with arm rests for sitting up in bed.


Getting out of bed

You will be asked to limit the use of your arms for several weeks after surgery. This can be a problem when trying to get out of bed. The following suggestions help you get out of bed with minimal use of your arms.

- When in bed, pull your knees up towards your chest and tip to the side, gently rolling out of bed. Take care not to roll onto your breasts.
- Create a nest of pillows. Having many pillows to prop you in a semi-upright position helps give you that extra boost to get out of bed.
- Have someone put gentle pressure to your lower shoulder blades as you sit up. This gives you the extra power you need to get to your feet.

Showering and bathing

- If you have breast drains, the nurses usually remove them within the first 3 days following surgery. You may shower the day after drain removal (or as directed by your doctor). Do wash by gently touching your breasts.
- If you have taping under your breast, leave that in place until your appointment with the doctor in 2 weeks. You will continue to tape for 6 weeks following surgery.
- **Do not** shower if you have had a Free Nipple Graft. Your dressing must stay dry and in place until you see your doctor, usually in 7-9 days.

 Be sure to have someone nearby when taking your first shower in case you feel dizzy. Remember your center of gravity will be different and you will be taking a narcotic.

Do's and Don'ts for the next 6 weeks...

- ◆ **Do not** drive a motor vehicle for 5-7 days or until you can handle the steering wheel without discomfort. Do not drive while taking your narcotic. You will be able to wear a seat belt if you place a small pillow over your chest area.
- ◆ **Do not** engage in sexual activity for at least 1 week.
- ◆ **Do not** smoke or be around anyone who smokes for 2 weeks. Smoking delays healing and can lead to infection.
- ◆ **Do not** lift more than 5 lbs. or bend at the waist to lift for 6 weeks.
- ◆ **Do not** participate in strenuous activities such as running or aerobics for 6 weeks.
- ◆ **Do not** tan at the incision lines for at least 6 months.

- ✓ Do resume walking at a gentle pace.
- ✓ You may return to work in 1-6 weeks (average time is 3 weeks) depending upon your work activity.
- ✓ Do report signs of infection.

Signs of Infection:

- ◆ A temperature over 100°F.
- ◆ Redness at the incision line that is beginning to spread away from the incision after the first 48 hours.
- ◆ Yellow pus-like or foul smelling drainage larger than dime size from the incision or drain sites.
- ◆ Increased pain/discomfort that is not relieved by your pain medicine.

Also report if pain and swelling in one breast is much greater than the other.

Contact Information:

Contact your doctor during office hours:

Monday to Friday from 8AM – 5PM

Call 603-650-5148

On weekends or after hours:

Call 603-650-5000 and ask the operator to page the plastic surgeon on call.

Prescription Line: Call (603) 653-3905

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center is a charitable organization and has a financial assistance policy.



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MEDICAL CENTER

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