Breast surgery
Advice for going home after your procedure

the women's
the royal women's hospital

This fact sheet explains what to do and what to expect in the first few days after breast surgery.

It's for people recovering from surgeries such as:

- removing a specific area in the breast (wide local excision)
- removing the breast without reconstruction (simple mastectomy)
- armpit surgeries, like sentinel node biopsy and axillary dissection.

If needed, you might get another fact sheet with more detailed information.

Looking after yourself

For the first 24 hours after your procedure:

- rest as much as possible - don't do any exercise, housework or cooking
- avoid heavy lifting and overstretching, like hanging washing, for at least 3 days
- don't drive a car
- don't drink alcohol
- don't use machinery or electrical appliances that could cause injury
- don't sign any legal documents
- be careful when walking and moving around - it's normal to feel lightheaded after anaesthesia or pain medicines.

Looking after your wound

Wear a well-fitted, wire-free bra for 3 to 7 days after your surgery, both day and night. This helps the internal wound heal and can reduce pain, bruising and swelling.

A nurse will check your wound before you leave the hospital and explain your wound care plan.

You may have 1 of 2 types of dressing

Option 1 - This dressing is caramel-coloured and waterproof. If you have this dressing, you can shower on the same day as your surgery. Don't use water that is too hot, as this may increase blood flow to the area and cause bruising or swelling. The dressing will stay in place until you return for your first post-operative appointment.

You might see some blood collecting under the dressing. This is normal.

If you have any concerns, for example, the dressing peels away or gets wet, there are blisters on the edge of the wound, or it leaks a lot, please contact a breast care nurse.

Option 2 - This option uses a glue-like dressing. If you have this dressing, you cannot shower for 48 hours after your surgery.

After 48 hours, you can shower as normal, and the glue will gradually wash away. There is no other dressing to remove.

Both options use stitches inside the body that dissolve over time.

Please leave all dressings on until your clinic review.

Infection after breast surgery is uncommon., but if you notice more pain, redness, swelling around the wound, or a fever, contact a breast care nurse.

If you need medical help

If you have any concerns or need medical help, please contact a breast care nurse:

- The Royal Women's Hospital,
  Breast care nurses
  Call 8345 3565 or 0466 813 775
  Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm.

If you need medical help outside of these hours:

- The Royal Melbourne Hospital
  Call 9342 7000 (ask them to page the Breast BOE registrar)
  You can call any time of day or night.
- In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) or visit your local Emergency Department.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.
You can call any time of day or night.
1800 737 732 (24-hour support service)
1800respect.org.au

Do you need an interpreter?

You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.
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