

Postoperative Instructions for Patients Undergoing Breast Surgery

1. Getting home and postoperative supervision.

It is extremely hazardous to drive after general anesthesia or intravenous sedation. Please arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home and stay with you for at least 24 hours.

2. Activity for the first 24 hours.

The effects of anesthesia can remain in your body as long as 24 hours. After surgery, you must plan to rest for 24 hours and avoid straining and stooping.

3. Sleeping position.

For three days after surgery sleep on your back elevated with 2 pillows.

4. Diet.

After surgery you may take liquids such as soup, tea, soft drinks, or Jell-O. Gradually progress to a soft diet and then to a regular diet over the next 24 hours.

5. Medications, herbal supplements, vitamins, and alcohol.

Regular Medications. You may resume your regular medications unless Dr. Boyd directs otherwise. However, avoid aspirin and aspirin-containing products for two weeks before and after surgery. Remember, many herbal supplements adversely affect the clotting process and actively cause bruising and bleeding. These should be stopped two weeks before surgery and may be resumed two weeks afterwards. Dr. Boyd does not recommend taking mega doses of vitamins more than the normal daily requirement (which is adequately met by a normal balanced diet). Please discontinue this form of medication for two weeks before and after surgery unless you are being treated for a specific deficiency. One multivitamin tablet per day is permissible, however.

Discharge Medications. Fill your prescriptions and take your post-operative medications as directed. If you should become nauseated or develop a rash, call the office

Pain Medications. Most strong pain medications are derived from morphine and are called opioids. They can induce varying degrees of nausea and vomiting in different individuals. If this is the case with you, try reducing the dose and taking the medication with meals. If the nausea persists you should take the anti-nausea medication as directed. If you remain nauseated, contact Dr. Boyd who will switch you to an alternate pain killer; but remember, any opioid can potentially make you sick. Persistent nausea may necessitate discontinuing opiates altogether and taking Tylenol or Ibuprofen instead. In any case, it is advisable to stop taking opioids as soon as possible to eliminate the associated drowsiness, hasten your recovery, and reduce the risk of dependence.

Stool Softener. Opioids can cause another troublesome side-effect: constipation. Avoid this by taking Colace 100mg twice daily or a stool softener of your own choice.

Antinausea medications. Dr. Boyd usually prescribes a medication that dissolves under your tongue. You may take this three times daily. Please note that this medication also causes constipation!

Antibiotics. Take postoperative antibiotics if directed. If you develop an itchy rash call Dr. Boyd's office.

Alcohol. Avoid alcohol until post-operative medications are finished.

6. Dressings.

Remove your bra and outer dressings to shower. Leave the Steri-Strips in place.

7. Wound care, shampooing, showering.

Showering may be restricted if you have drains. The bra supports the incisions, keeps the dressing in place and (in cases of augmentation) facilitates the proper positioning of the implant as you heal. Shower daily and wash over the incisions with a soft sponge and soapy water. Rinse and dry. Reapply an absorbent pad over the incisions and hold it in place with your bra.

8. Activity after the first 24 hours (including driving).

Avoid strenuous activity for two weeks after surgery. However, moderate walking is encouraged. You may drive after three days if your car is an automatic and seven days if you have a standard shift. Never drive if you are taking pain medication. You can return to the gym or the pool in four weeks unless Dr. Boyd instructs you otherwise. It is extremely important to limit the use of your arms for two weeks after surgery. Do not raise them above your shoulders until you are told to do so. Do not lift anything heavy, including children. Avoid household chores such as vacuuming until cleared to do so.

9. Things to avoid. (See 2 and 5 also).

It is vital that you do not smoke after surgery to avoid respiratory and wound healing complications. Smoking can cause wounds to break down even after they have healed, and may result in tissue loss.

10. Bruising, swelling and other normal events.

Your breasts will have some initial swelling, which will subside over a few weeks. Unusual, severe pain accompanied by noticeable swelling, bleeding, fever or rash should be called to the attention of Dr. Boyd. It is common to experience some numbness for several weeks or months. Sharpness, burning sensations and pains just below the armpit are common during healing. Occasionally, the nipples may become excessively sensitive. You may also have some bruising. This should disappear in ten days to two weeks. It will take several weeks before you can see the final result. If you have unusual or severe pain or swelling, excessive bleeding from the dressing or any other concerns, contact Dr. Boyd at once.

Someone in the office will call you the day after surgery to check on your condition and answer any questions you might have. You can reach Dr. Boyd or a staff member around the clock by calling (310) 295-2287.

These instructions are not intended to cover every possible problem that could arise. Good judgment on your part is essential for a good result.