

## Implant Exchange

### *For breast reconstruction*

*This handout tells what to expect when having implant exchange surgery. It includes how to prepare for surgery, and how to plan for your recovery.*

### About Your Surgery

To reconstruct your breast(s), your surgeon placed a tissue expander beneath your *pectoralis* muscle and filled it with saline. For the next step, your surgeon will remove the tissue expander and replace it with a silicone implant.

This is an outpatient surgery, which means you do not have to stay overnight in the hospital. It uses *general anesthesia* (medicine to make you sleep). Your surgeon will use the same incision that was used for your mastectomy.

### Your Other Breast

If you are having an implant for reconstruction in only one of your breasts, you may choose to place an implant in your other breast to help your breasts look more even. This is called *augmentation*.

For augmentation, your surgeon will make a small incision in the natural crease beneath your breast and place a small implant under the muscle. If you choose to have this surgery, it will be done at the same time as your implant exchange.



*Talk with your surgeon if you have any questions about your implant exchange or augmentation surgery.*

### How to Prepare

- For 1 week before your surgery, do **not** take any aspirin or aspirin-like products. (See attached sheet for more information.)
- If you normally shave near your surgical site, do **not** shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.

## 24 Hours Before Your Surgery

- **Shower:** Take a shower the night before your surgery. Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.
  - Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face, hair, or private areas. (See the directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on these areas.
  - Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothes.
- **Arrival time:** The pre-surgery nurse will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your surgery. If you are having your surgery on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206.598.6334.
- The nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and remind you:
  - Not to eat or drink after a certain time
  - Which of your regular medicines to take or not take
  - To sip only enough water to swallow your pills
  - That someone must drive you home

## Day of Surgery

### At Home

- **Shower:** Take another shower on the morning of your surgery. Follow the same steps as you did for your shower the night before.
- **Medicines:** Follow the instructions you received about what medicines to take or not take. If you take any medicines, sip only enough water to swallow your pills.

### At the Hospital

- **Heating blanket:** While you wait to go into the operating room, we will cover you with a heating blanket. This will warm your body and reduce your risk of infection. Please ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.

## After Surgery

### For Your Safety

Medicine given during and after your surgery will affect you. For 24 hours after your surgery do **not**:

- Drive or travel alone
- Use machinery

- Drink alcohol
- Sign any legal papers or make important decisions
- Be responsible for the care of another person

### **Incision Care**

Follow the instructions we gave you about caring for your incisions:

- If there is a large white dressing over your breasts, remove it after 48 hours.
- If there is white tape on your incision, leave it in place until it falls off.

### **Wearing a Bra**

Your doctor will tell you if you need a special surgical bra or *bandeau* (implant stabilizer band). If we give you a surgical bra or bandeau:

- Wear it 24 hours a day for 4 weeks.
- Take it off only when you shower.

If your doctor decides you do not need a surgical bra or bandeau, you can wear any bra that does not have underwire and does not shift the position of your implants.

### **Sleep Position**

- Sleep on your back for the first 4 weeks after surgery, whether or not you are wearing a surgical bra. After that, you may sleep on your side.
- Avoid sleeping on your stomach until 3 months after surgery.

### **Shower**

- You may start taking showers 48 hours after your surgery. 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.

### **Going Home**

You will go home the day of your surgery. You will not be able to drive yourself, so plan for someone to give you a ride home.

### **Activity and Return to Work**

- Do **not** lift, pull, or push heavy objects for 4 weeks after your surgery. If doing something hurts or pulls on your incisions, do not do it.
- Add activities as your comfort level allows.
- Most people take 1 or 2 weeks off work to recover from this surgery.

- Avoid traveling until 4 weeks after surgery.
- Avoid any dental cleanings or procedures until 6 weeks after surgery. Dental work can increase your chance of infection.

### **Pain Control**

- You may feel soreness in your chest and back muscles. This is normal.
- You may have sharp or shooting pains from time to time. This is also normal as the nerves recover from surgery.
- Read the handout “Pain After Reconstructive Surgery.”

### **Swelling**

Some swelling and bruising is normal after this surgery. It should slowly improve by about 4 weeks after surgery. Do **not** use ice on your mastectomy skin. Using ice can cause problems with your implant.

### **When to Call**

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Chills
- Shaking
- Any sign of infection:
  - Redness
  - Severe pain that is not helped by your pain medicine
  - Swelling
  - Bad-smelling drainage
  - An increase in the amount of drainage from your wound
- Nausea, vomiting, or both
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

### **Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217, and press 8.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the resident on call for your surgeon to be paged.