

Latissimus Flap Reconstruction

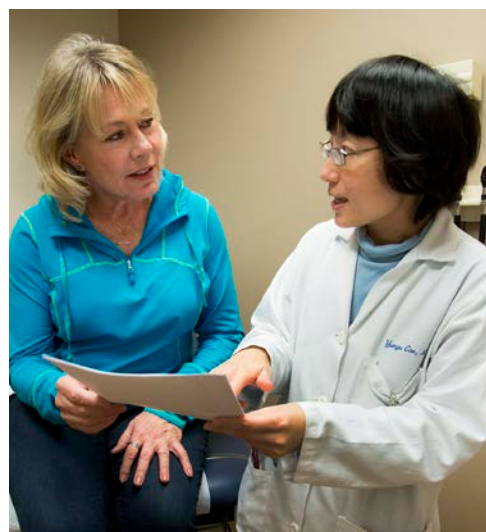
What to expect and how to prepare

This handout explains latissimus flap reconstruction. It includes how to prepare, what to expect, self-care, and when to call your doctor or nurse.

What is the latissimus muscle?

The *latissimus* muscle is on your upper back. It is the muscle that allows you to push your arm down. You use it when swimming, cross-country skiing, and other activities.

The latissimus muscle is often used to replace tissue that has been removed during surgery for cancer or other diseases. If you had radiation, some of your radiated skin will be removed and replaced with the skin that is moved from your back.



Be sure to ask your doctor any questions you have about what will happen during your reconstruction surgery.

Reconstruction Steps

- During surgery, your latissimus muscle will be moved to fill in the space created when a tumor or other growth is removed.
- About 10 to 14 days after your surgery, you will have a follow-up clinic visit. At this visit:
 - Any staples or sutures will be removed.
 - Drains that are ready to be removed will be taken out.
 - We will give you new wound care instructions.

How to Prepare

- Do **not** take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting for 7 days before your surgery. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, and others) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn, and others).

- Do **not** shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgical site, do **not** shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.
- You will stay in the hospital for 2 to 4 days after your surgery. When you go home, you will need someone to help you prepare food and do household chores for 1 week.

Day Before Surgery

- **Shower:** Take a shower the night before your surgery. Use the antibacterial soap Hibiclens to wash your body. You can buy Hibiclens at any drugstore.
 - Do **not** use the Hibiclens on your face and hair. (See directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair.
 - Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothing.
- **Arrival time:** Staff from the operating room (OR) will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your surgery. If you are having surgery on a Monday, they will call you the Friday before. If you do not receive this call by 5 p.m., please call 206.598.6541.

OR staff will tell you when to come to the hospital. They will also remind you not to eat or drink after a certain time.

Surgery Day

At Home

- **Shower:** Take another shower the morning of your surgery. Follow the same instructions as you did the night before.

At the Hospital

- **Heating blanket:** We will cover you with a heating blanket while you wait to go into the OR. This will warm your body and lower your risk of infection. Please ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.

After Surgery

You will wake up in the recovery room. You will feel sleepy. You will have:

- An **intravenous (IV) line** in your vein. This flexible tube will be used to give you medicine for pain and nausea.
- **Sequential compression devices (SCDs)** on your legs. These are inflatable stockings that help with blood flow to keep blood clots from forming.
- Several **drains** (tubes) in your incisions.

You may also have:

- A **catheter tube** inserted into your bladder to drain your urine.

Recovering in Your Hospital Room

Incisions

- Your back incision will be about 6 to 8 inches long.
- Your other incisions will depend on the type of surgery you had.
- All of your incisions will be covered with white tape (Steri-Strips) and gauze.

Pain Control

We will give you pain medicine as needed while you are in the hospital. Your nurse will check with you often to find out how you are feeling.

Going Home

Medicines

- Use extra-strength acetaminophen (Extra Strength Tylenol) according to the dosage instructions on the container. Or, use the pain medicine your doctor prescribed for you. It is important to take pain medicine before your pain is severe. (See the handout “Pain Management.”)
- If needed, your doctor will prescribe antibiotics. Take them exactly as instructed.

Drain Care

You will have small drains under your skin in your back. You may also have them at your reconstruction site. You will go home with the back drains in place. Your nurses will teach you how to care for them.

You will need to measure and record the amount of drainage every day. When the output is less than 30 cc in 24 hours for 2 days in a row, your drains can be removed. This can be done at your follow-up visit, or you can schedule a visit with a nurse to have them removed.

To schedule this visit, call 206.598.1217 and press 2.

Incision Care

- You will have white surgical tape called Steri-Strips over your incisions. This tape will fall off on its own, or can be removed after 2 weeks.
- If there is drainage from your incision, cover it with a dressing (bandage) and replace it as needed. Panty liners work great as a dressing. If there is no drainage, leave the incision open to the air.

Activity

- Do **not** push, pull, or lift anything heavier than 5 pounds for 2 weeks after your surgery. (A half gallon of milk weighs about 4 pounds.) At your 2-week follow-up visit, your surgeon will tell you how long you need to follow these restrictions.
- Do **not** do any running or jumping activities for 6 weeks.
- You can walk for exercise. Walking will help you recover.

When to Call

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing (hold pressure on the site to lessen bleeding)
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and chills
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
 - Redness
 - Increasing pain
 - Swelling
 - Bad-smelling drainage
 - A change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea or 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 4 p.m., call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217 and press 2.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the resident on call for Plastic Surgery.