Breast Implant Reconstruction

What to expect and how to prepare for your operation

4-Step Reconstruction

There are 4 steps to breast implant reconstruction:

1. Your doctor will place a tissue expander/implant beneath your breast tissue and muscle on the affected side.

2. About 3 weeks after step 1, your doctor will inject fluid into a filling port in the expander to stretch your breast tissue. You will get fluid injections once a week or once every 2 weeks until you have the volume needed. These injections are done in the doctor’s office. When your expander is full, your skin will be allowed to stretch and relax over it for 1 to 3 months. (See pages 3 and 4 of this handout for more about expansion.)

3. After you finish your expansion, your expander port will be removed and your breast will be reconstructed with implants made from silicone, saline, or tissue from your own body, called autologous tissue.

4. Later, you will be ready for nipple reconstruction, followed by nipple tattoo. Your nurse will give you a separate handout about nipple reconstruction.

How to Prepare for Your Operation

Things to Remember

- Do not take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting for 1 week before your operation. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). See attached sheet for more information.

- 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.
24 Hours Before Your Operation

- **Take 2 showers:** Take 1 shower the night before, and a second shower the morning of your operation. Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.
  
  Do **not** use the antibacterial soap 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:** The pre-surgery nurse will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your operation. If you are having surgery on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the pre-surgery nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206-598-6334.
  
  The pre-surgery nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and will 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.

- **Heating blanket:** To reduce your risk of infection, you will be covered with a heating blanket to warm your body while you wait to go into the operating room. Ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.

What to Expect After Your Operation

**Precautions and Self-care**

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

- Drive.
- Travel alone by bus, taxi, plane, etc.
- Use machinery.
- Drink alcohol.
- Sign any legal papers.
- Be responsible for the care of another person.

You may shower 48 hours after surgery, even if your drain is still in place. Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming until your drain is removed and all your incisions are closed.

**Your Incision**

Your mastectomy incision will be reopened to place the tissue expander/implant. You will have white surgical tape covering your incision. Leave this tape in place until your doctor removes it.
Drain Care

When you leave the hospital, you will have a drain in place. You need to measure and record the amount of drainage daily. When the fluid coming out of the drain is less than 30 cc in 24 hours for 2 days in a row, please call 206-598-4549 to make an appointment to have the drain removed. Or, it can be removed at your follow-up visit.

Medicines

- Use extra-strength Tylenol or the pain medicine your doctor prescribed for you.
- Take antibiotic medicines as prescribed.

Expansion

You will come to the Surgical Specialties Center once a week or once every 2 weeks to have fluid injected into your expander. Your doctor will insert a needle into the filling port. When the fluid is injected you may feel a tightness in your chest. Take your pain medicine as needed.

The number of visits for expansion will depend on the amount of fluid that needs to be injected. Expansion usually takes 4 to 8 visits. When your expander is full, your skin will be allowed to stretch and relax over it for 1 to 3 months.

Call the Nurse Advice Line or Your Doctor If You Have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing.
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C).
- Shaking and chills.
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
  - Redness
  - Increasing pain
  - Swelling
  - Foul-smelling drainage
  - A change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit.