

Liposuction and Fat Grafting for Breast Reconstruction

What to expect and care after the procedure

This handout explains liposuction and fat grafting when used in breast reconstruction. It includes what to expect and how to care for your incisions and areas affected by the procedure.

What are liposuction and fat grafting?

Liposuction and fat grafting are part of breast reconstruction surgery. These procedures are often done at the breast revision stage of surgery, to improve symmetry after a previous procedure.

- For liposuction, your surgeon removes fat from an area of your body with a small tube called a *liposuction cannula*. This area may be the front of your abdomen, the sides of your hips or abdomen (flanks), or your thighs.
- This fat is then injected into your breast. This is called *fat grafting*.



Ask your doctor if you have questions about your procedure.

Incision Care

- You will have small skin punctures (holes) where the liposuction cannula was passed beneath your skin. Each one may be closed with a small stitch that will dissolve on its own. The puncture sites may be covered with strips of white tape called Steri-strips.
- If your incision has strips of white tape (Steri-strips) over it, leave them in place until they fall off.
- If you have a gauze dressing over your incision, remove it 48 hours after surgery, before you shower for the first time.
- Some bloody fluid may drain from these puncture sites for 24 to 72 hours. You may need to put a new gauze dressing or pantyliner over these sites 2 to 3 times a day until they stop draining.

Hygiene

- Take a shower 48 hours after surgery. We recommend daily showers after that to reduce the risk of infection. 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 and no scabs remain. This may take 4 to 6 weeks.



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Activities and Return to Work

- For 2 weeks (unless instructed otherwise):
 - Do **not** lift, push, or pull more than 8 lbs. (about the weight of a gallon of water). This includes children and pets.
 - Avoid repetitive arm movements such as chores (vacuuming, washing dishes, laundry).
- For 4 weeks:
 - Do **not** sleep on your stomach.
 - Avoid heavy or aerobic exercise (activities that cause heavy breathing or sustained elevated heart rate).
 - Walking is encouraged and helpful for healing and rebuilding strength. Start with 3 to 4 walks a day for 5 to 10 minutes each. Gradually increase your distance and length of time as you heal.
- Swelling in your legs can happen after this surgery. If you have swelling, elevate your legs on a pillow or chair when at rest. You may purchase knee-high compression stockings if the swelling is not improving.
- Returning to work varies from person to person, and depends on the type of work you do. Please talk with your surgeon about what may be best for you.

Liposuction Areas

- You will wake up from surgery in a compression garment covering the areas of liposuction. Wear this garment 24 hours a day, every day for 4 weeks (unless instructed otherwise). It is okay to remove the garment for showering and laundering.
- Bruising and swelling may form around the sites where you had liposuction and may also spread to nearby areas.
- You may use ice or cold packs on your liposuctioned areas only, not on or near your breasts. Ice and compression will help with pain, swelling, bruising, and contouring.
 - Do **not** place ice directly on the skin. Place a cloth or thin towel between the ice and your skin.
 - Place it on the area for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off.

Fat Grafting Areas

- Do **not** wear tight or compressive garments on your breasts for 4 weeks. You may wear a loose-fitting bra without underwire, such as a soft camisole or Coobie bra for comfort.
- If you were placed in a surgical bra, wear this bra 24 hours a day for 4 weeks.
- You may have bruises and swelling around your breast where the fat was injected.
- You may have small scabs across your chest at the injection sites.

These should heal over time.

When to Contact the Care Team

Contact our clinic or your doctor if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing (hold pressure on the site to help with bleeding until you can get medical care)
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and/or chills
- Any signs of infection at your surgical site:
 - Redness
 - Increased swelling
 - Bad smelling drainage
 - Pus or cloudy-colored drainage (white, yellow, or green in color)
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- New rash
- Pain that is getting worse and is no longer helped by your pain medicine

If you are experiencing redness, swelling, pain, cramping, or warmth usually in one limb, these may be signs of a blood clot. Please go to the ER.

If you are experiencing new chest pain or shortness of breath, please call 911.

Questions?

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

During Clinic Hours

(Monday through Friday except holidays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.):

If you have any questions or concerns, send a message to your surgeon through MyChart. Please include a photo if needed.

Or you may call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217 option 2.

Urgent Needs Outside of Clinic Hours:

If you have an urgent care need after hours, on weekends, or holidays, please call 206.598.6190 and ask to speak to the plastic surgeon on call.