

My Post-Op Mastectomy Checklist

The day of surgery

- You will wake up in the PACU (Post Anesthesia Care Unit). You may have oxygen, a blood pressure cuff, an IV, and/or other monitors attached to you at this point. You will probably stay in the PACU for 1-2 hours.
- You will have received pain medication during surgery, so you should not be in much pain when you wake up.
- You will have one or more post-operative drains.
- You will stay overnight in the hospital.

Pain control is important! Pain prevents you from restarting activity and breathing deeply. Do not hesitate to use or ask for pain medication if you need it.

The day after your surgery

- You will be able to eat a regular diet and resume regular activity
- You will receive drain care instructions and a physical therapist may see you to discuss post surgical exercises
- You will be discharged with a prescription for pain medication
- If you have reconstruction you will also get a prescription for antibiotics

After discharge

- **Dressings.** Your incision will be dressed with surgical glue, steri-strips, or other dressings. Usually dissolvable stitches are used, but occasionally non-absorbable sutures are used.
- **Bathing.** Sponge bathe until your surgeon tells you it is okay to shower. If you have reconstruction please ask your plastic surgeon when it is okay to shower.
- **Drain Care.** See the 'Caring for Your Drain' for instructions on drain care.
- **Activity Level.** Surgery makes you tired. You can do nearly all of your normal activities, but allow yourself frequent rest periods. You should avoid heavy lifting on the surgical side for four weeks. Talk with your breast surgeon or plastic surgeon about post-operative activity restrictions for your individual case.
- **Pain relief.** You will be given a narcotic pain pill to take as needed after surgery. Some women do not need it at all, but it can be especially helpful the first night. You can also take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for mild pain.
- **Monitor yourself.** Watch for signs of infection, and contact your surgeon's office if you have any concerns about your drains or note any:
 - Temperature above 101° Fahrenheit
 - Increased redness around the incision or drainage
- **Exercise.** See the 'Post-Operative Activity Guidelines and Exercises' for post-mastectomy exercises.
- **Sensation.** The mastectomy incision is usually numb. Avoid ice or heat packs on this area, because it's hard to tell what is too hot or too cold.