

# **DIEP/TRAM Flap Breast Reconstruction Post-Operative Instructions**

---

## **What are my post-operative instructions?**

- Have someone drive you home after surgery and help you at home for 1-2 days.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Follow balanced diet.
- Decreased activity may promote constipation, so you may want to add more raw fruit to your diet, and be sure to increase fluid intake.
- Take pain medication as prescribed. Do not take aspirin or any products containing aspirin for one week after surgery.
- Do not drink alcohol when taking pain medications.
- Even when not taking pain medications, no alcohol for 3 weeks as it causes fluid retention.
- If you are taking vitamins with iron, resume these as tolerated.
- Do not smoke. Smoking delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

## **What should my activity level be?**

- Start walking as soon as possible, this helps to reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots.
- You may use your arms for activities of daily living for the first three weeks, but do not push over your head until 3 weeks post-op.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking any pain medications (narcotics).
- Unless stated on this form, discuss your time off work with your surgeon.
- No driving for 4 weeks. When abdominal area will allow for sudden braking, you may resume driving.
- No heavy lifting for 6 to 8 weeks.

## **How do I take care of my incision?**

- You may shower 72 hours after surgery with drains in place.
- If you have implants, no showering until drains are removed.
- No tub soaking for 6 to 8 weeks.
- Avoid exposing scars to sun for at least 12 months.
- Always use a strong sunblock, if sun exposure is unavoidable (SPF 30 or greater).
- Keep steri-strips on.
- Keep incisions clean and inspect daily for signs of infection.
- Do not wear a bra.
- Sleep with pillows under knee for 2 weeks (some women choose to sleep in a recliner or lounge chair).

## **What can I expect?**

- Maximum discomfort will occur the first few days following surgery; you may experience incision discomfort and generalized discomfort in your breasts and abdomen.
- Oozing can be expected.

## **What will it look like?**

- A new breast(s) mound(s) will be constructed with sutures around the outer edges.
- The abdomen will be tight and much flatter in appearance.
- The majority of swelling will subside in 3-4 weeks, but some swelling may persist for up to 3 months.
- You will walk bent over and will slowly rise over the first 1-2 weeks.

## **What follow-up care will I receive?**

- Your 1<sup>st</sup> post-operative visit will be scheduled for 7 to 10 days after

surgery. Some drains may be taken out during this visit.

- Your 2<sup>nd</sup> post-operative visit will be for removal of remaining drains.
- Your 3<sup>rd</sup> post-operative visit will be scheduled somewhere between 4-6 weeks from the initial surgery date.

### **When should I call my doctor?**

- If you have increased swelling or bruising.
- If swelling and redness persist after a few days.
- If you have increased redness along the incision.
- If you have severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- If you have any side effects to medications; such as, rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.
- If you have an oral temperature over 100.4 degrees.
- If you have any yellowish or greenish drainage from the incisions or notice a foul odor.
- If you have bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure.
- If you have loss of feeling or motion.

### **Who should I call if I have questions?**

- (734) 998-6022, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- After hours and on weekends, call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Erin Larowe  
Reviewers: Adeyiza Momoh, MD

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 1/2015