

Nipple Areolar Reconstruction Post-Operative Instructions

When is nipple areolar reconstruction (NAR) done?

Nipple Areolar reconstruction is done at least 3 months after a Reconstructed Breast has been achieved. NAR reconstruction is done as an outpatient.

What should I expect when I wake up from surgery?

Reconstruction of the areola is most often achieved with a full-thickness skin graft. Donor sites include the following:

- The TRAM abdominal incision
- Medial thigh
- Breast Mastectomy scar

These donor sites will have a steri strip over the incision. Leave the steri strip in place until you return to clinic. Sutures used for this operative area are dissolvable. You may remove the gauze dressing after 48 hours.

- **For patients with a bolster (nipple graft)** - When you wake up from surgery you will have a bolster over your Nipple graft. This bolster looks like an old fashioned pin cushion. The bolster is sutured to your breast and must be kept dry. The purpose of the bolster is to hold the graft in place. You do nothing to this area until your first Post-op appointment.
- **For patients without a bolster** - When a graft is not used, the nipple is visible and does not need to be covered. Skin glue is applied over sutures for non-grafted nipples.

What are my post-operative instructions?

- **For patients with a bolster (nipple graft)** - Shower after the bolster is removed.
- **For patients without a bolster** - Shower after 48 hours.
- No hot tubs or baths for 6-8 weeks
- Do not allow water from the shower to directly hit the breast. The shower water may be directed on your back. You may shower with soap and water.
- Allow your nipples to air dry.
- For patients with a graft/reconstructed areola, completely cover areola and nipple with Xeroform, 4x4, and tape securely.
- You may start wearing a bra 3 weeks after surgery. The goal is to avoid direct pressure/constriction on surgical site.

What will happen at my first post-op appointment?

The appointment will be 5- 7 days after your surgery. If it is a day other than your physician's day to be in clinic, you will be seen by the nurse. The nurse or medical assistant will be removing your bolster. Sutures around the areola will be left in one week later. You will be given instructions and supplies to care for your grafted areas until your next clinic appointment. At the second post-op visit sutures around areola will be removed.

If your first Post-op appointment happens to be the same day that your physician's is in clinic; the bolster and all steri strips will be removed by the nurse. Once your surgeon has seen you, instructions will be given to remove and clip any sutures. The nurse or medical assistant will teach you how to dress the graft sites.

For patients without a bolster, the incisions are evaluated and all sutures are left in place. Sutures will dissolve over time.

What activity restrictions will I have?

- Patients may return to work in two weeks.

- You must be off of pain medication before returning back to work.

Who should I call if I have questions?

- **Clinic Phone (734) 998-6022**

For questions and prescription refills please contact our clinic at during office hours (Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

- **Hospital Paging (734) 936-6267**

After hours and on weekends, call and ask for the Plastic Surgeon on call.

How do I manage my pain?

Pre-operative Instructions:

- Prior to your surgery, pain medication will be prescribed by your Primary care physician or referring physician.
- If you **do not** have an established Primary care physician, please call the Physician referral service at **1-800-211-8181**.
- To establish yourself with a primary care physician **prior** to your surgery, please schedule an appointment with the new primary care physician.

Post-operative Instructions:

- After having surgery, it is expected you will experience some pain even with pain medication. This is a normal part of recovery.
- You will be provided a prescription for pain medicine that will last until your first return post-op visit.
- At your first post-op visit, your pain will be evaluated. The surgical team will manage your pain for the acute recovery phase.
- Acute pain management for major surgery is typically 6 to 12 weeks.
- Acute pain management for minor procedures is typically 7-10 days.
- You may not drive while you are taking narcotic pain medication or otherwise instructed by your surgical team.

Managing Prescription Refills:

- Please call the clinic at **734-998-6022** for medication refills.
- You may also contact us using the Patient Portal at <https://www.myuofmhealth.org>.
- Messages received after hours or on the weekend will be processed the next business day.
- Please allow 24 hours or one business day to have your request reviewed by your surgical team.

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