

Brachioplasty (Arm Lift) 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 unless approved by your physician.
- 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, as smoking delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

What should my activity level be?

- Start walking as soon as possible, as this helps to reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking any pain medications (narcotics).
- Social activities can be resumed 10-14 days after surgery.
- Avoid strenuous exercise and activities such as sports for 4 weeks.

How do I take care of my incision?

- If drainage tube(s) have been placed, you may shower 48 hours after

removal.

- 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.

How should I expect to feel?

- Postoperative pain is minimal.
- Your arms will be wrapped with ace wraps for compression immediately after surgery.
- You will be required to purchase a compression garment after surgery that is specific for your procedure.
- You will need to wear this garment 4-6 weeks after surgery. This is determined by your physician.
- There will be swelling and discoloration.
- There may be numbness around the operative areas.

What will it look like?

- There will be a scar in the underarm area; this scar will be hidden when arm is against body.
- If incision extends down to and around elbow, scar may be visible.

What follow-up care will I receive?

- Some sutures will be absorbed; remaining sutures will generally be removed in 1-2 weeks.

When should I call my doctor?

- If you have increased swelling or bruising.
- If swelling and redness persist for 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 or constipation.
- 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: David L. Brown, MD

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 2/2014