

Caring for myself after Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy (SLNB)

What are my general instructions?

1. Eat a balanced diet and try to maintain good nutrition. Also, drink plenty of fluids. Some of the pain medications can cause constipation, and drinking plenty of water will help prevent this.
2. You may resume light activity as you feel up to it.
 - Do not lift more than 5 lbs. (a bag of sugar or a 2-liter bottle of soda)
 - Avoid strenuous activity or excessive stretching with the involved arm.
3. Avoid driving for at least a few days after the surgery. Your reflexes are slower than you think, and any pain from the incision is distracting. Also, you can not drive while taking narcotic pain medications because they will further slow your response time.

What pain can I expect after surgery?

It is normal to have some pain after surgery. The goal of managing your acute pain after surgery is to minimize your pain enough to feel comfortable getting up, taking deep breaths, wash, get dressed, and do simple tasks in your home. Pain is usually the worst in the first 24-48 hours.

How will I take care of my pain?

You will receive a prescription for a strong pain medication (painkiller) that contains opioids (also called “narcotics”) for **break-through pain**. Break-through pain means pain that is not controlled by Around-The-Clock acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Use the opioid only if you have break-through pain. Keep in mind that about half of patients who have this surgery need 2 or 3 prescription pain pills, or less, to manage their after-surgery pain. Most

patients have stopped taking prescription pain medication by 1 day after surgery.

Alternating over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), maybe all you need to control your pain.

How will I use medications to relieve pain?

- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) 500-1000mg 4 times per day.
The maximum daily dose for an adult is 4000mg per day.
- Take Ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) 400-800mg 3 to 4 times per day.
The maximum daily dose for an adult is 3200mg per day. Take Ibuprofen with food to prevent upset stomach.

If your pain is not controlled with over-the-counter medications, take only as much of the prescription painkiller as you need. Start with 1/2 of a pill.

- As your pain goes down start taking less of the prescription painkiller and use Tylenol®, Advil®, or Motrin® instead. This is called “tapering off”.
- Do not drink alcohol or drive while taking narcotic pain medication.
- Opioids may cause constipation. If you get constipated, you may need to take a stool softener or laxative. Your pharmacist or we can advise you on this.

Use the diary in the appendix on page 5 to keep track of the amount of pain medications you are taking.

For your safety and the safety of others follow these instructions:

- Store opioids in a locked cabinet, out of reach of children.
- Do not keep leftover pain medications after your pain is gone. Safely dispose of pain medications you no longer need. You can find a map of locations to dispose of leftover medication at: <https://michigan-open.org/safe-opioid-disposal/disposal-map/>

Surgical Oncology
Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy (SLNB)

How will I care for my dressing?

1. Leave your outer dressings on for at least 48 hours. The sutures are underneath the skin and will not need to be removed. Over the incision is a clear skin sealant (Indermil). This will dissolve over the next few weeks.
2. After 48 hours you may remove the outer dressings and shower. For the first week avoid running water directly on the incision, and pat it dry with a clean towel.
3. Do not apply any creams or ointments to the incision. Do not use antiperspirant or shave under the arm where the surgery was performed for one week.
4. You may notice a light yellowish clear drainage from the lymph node biopsy site. This is known as a “seroma” and is generally not anything to be concerned about.
5. You may notice some blue staining of the skin of your breast from the blue dye. That is normal and will fade.

When should I watch for?

Watch for signs of infection including:

- increase in the swelling or redness near the area of the surgery
- the skin around the incision becomes hot to the touch.
- thick green or yellow drainage from the wound which may be pus
- bad smell around the wound
- fever over 101°F
- increasing pain

Call the clinic if you have any signs of infection. See the contact information on page 4.

What is my Follow-up care?

You may have already received a follow-up appointment with your surgeon. At that time we will discuss the results of the pathology report. Otherwise, your surgeon will call you with the report, and make arrangements for your follow-up appointment at that time. Depending on that report, you may need additional surgery, a referral to another physician, or routine follow-up. If you have not heard from us regarding your pathology after one week call the office. The contact number is on page 4.

Remember that healing from surgery, even if that surgery seems small, takes time. If you have any questions about your procedure, your follow-up instructions, or plan of care, do not hesitate to the Surgical Oncology Nurse Practitioner.

What is the contact information for Surgical Oncology?

- During business hours Monday-Friday 9-4:30 pm call the Surgical Oncology clinic at (734) 936-6000.
- For urgent calls after 4:30 pm, weekends and holidays, ask the operator to page the surgical oncology on-call resident at **(734) 936-6267**.

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Plain Language Editor: Ruti Volk, MSI, AHIP

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Appendix: diary to record the amount of pain medications you are taking. Copy table to add additional days

Day 1				
Time	Name of Medication	Amount of Opioid (in mg)	Amount of Acetaminophen (in mg)	Amount of Ibuprofen (in mg)
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
Total Daily				

Day 2				
Time	Name of Medication	Amount of Opioid (in mg)	Amount of Acetaminophen (in mg)	Amount of Ibuprofen (in mg)
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
Total Daily				

Day 3				
Time	Name of Medication	Amount of Opioid (in mg)	Amount of Acetaminophen (in mg)	Amount of Ibuprofen (in mg)
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
Total Daily				

Day 4				
Time	Name of Medication	Amount of Opioid (in mg)	Amount of Acetaminophen (in mg)	Amount of Ibuprofen (in mg)
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
AM PM				
Total Daily				