

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 a balanced diet.
- Stop consuming caffeine (for example: coffee, tea, chocolate) for 30 days after surgery. Gradually stop or limit your consumption before surgery to decrease your chances of caffeine withdrawal symptoms.
- 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 1st post-operative visit will be scheduled for 7 to 10 days after surgery. Some drains may be taken out during this visit.
- Your 2nd post-operative visit will be for removal of remaining drains.
- Your 3rd post-operative visit will be scheduled somewhere between 4-6 weeks from the initial surgery date.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Increased swelling or bruising.
- Swelling and redness that persist after a few days.
- Increased redness along the incision.
- Severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- Any side effects to medications such as:
 - Rash
 - Nausea
 - Headache
 - Vomiting
- An oral temperature over 100.4 degrees.
- Any yellowish or greenish drainage from the incisions or notice a foul odor.
- Bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure.
- 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.

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Author: Erin Larowe

Reviewers: Adeyiza Momoh, MD

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