

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME AFTER THE OPERATION



EATING AND DRINKING:

- Eat and drink normally, as tolerated.

PAIN MANAGEMENT:

- Take pain relief tablets as recommended/as required.
- Take any other medication given to you as recommended.

COMPLICATIONS:

- If you experience:
 - severe pain not helped with the medication provided eg. Panadol;
 - fever;
 - a wound that looks red, is leaking fluid, feels hot and tight, and/or
 - any changes in your arm or hand eg. swelling, pain, limitations in movement,
 please contact one of the following:
 - the Emergency Department where you had your operation;
 - your surgeon's rooms;
 - the Breast Care Nurse, or
 - your GP.

RECOVERY:

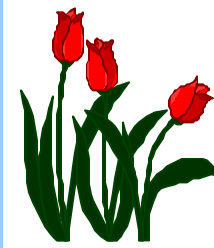
- Carry out your **exercises daily**, as instructed by your physiotherapist. The exercises eventually become easier & less discomfort should be experienced as you recover.
- You should **avoid** driving until advised by your doctor.
- **Rest** for 4 – 6 weeks (your doctor will advise about this).
- **Gradually** resume normal activities.
- Don't do any **heavy** lifting, housework or vigorous sport until advised by your doctor.
- Your doctor will advise you about returning to work/sport.
- If the glands under your arm have been removed, avoid any cuts scratches, knocks or bruises to the limb (arm). These can increase the risk of infection or of developing lymphoedema.
- Where possible avoid anyone taking blood, measuring your blood pressure or inserting an intravenous drip on the affected arm.
- Use an electric razor to shave under the arm which is safer to remove hair than manual razors or waxing.
- Familiarise yourself with the, " caring for your affected arm, do's & don'ts", contained in the booklet, All About Early Breast Cancer, pp.83-84.
- Most importantly, take care of yourself & do what makes you feel comfortable!

FOLLOWUP:

- A follow up appointment will be made prior to discharge. It may be between 1- 4 weeks after discharge.
- Your Breast Care Nurse may follow up with a visit or a phone call 1– 2 weeks after discharge, and is contactable by phone for any issues/concerns that you may have.
- Home nursing services may visit you if required, eg. if discharged with a drain-tube in place.

BREAST CARE NURSE:

- The Breast Care Nurse will provide you with up to date information; counselling and support, by maintaining contact via telephone and personal visits throughout your hospital stay and after discharge. She will maintain confidentiality at all times.



PATIENT CARE PATHWAY FOR BREAST SURGERY

This Patient Care Pathway outlines a guide to the expected care and treatment that you may receive while you are in hospital for your Breast Surgery, and following discharge from hospital. Please note that this is only a guide, and that care and treatment may be changed according to how you recover from your operation. Each woman is treated as an individual and the type of surgery and responses to treatment may vary from woman to woman. During your care please feel welcome to invite a support person to attend consultations with members of your care team.

You can expect to be in hospital following your operation for 3-5 nights, depending on the type of operation performed. Ask a member of the care team if they can estimate how long your stay in hospital will be.

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS

At anytime if you have a query or concern in regard to your emotional or physical health, or special requests for your hospital stay or your care plan, please talk to one of your health care team (listed below). This will enable the care team to organise appropriate assistance to meet your needs.

THE NAME OF YOUR OPERATION IS: _____

HEALTH CARE TEAM

- Your care team is:
(To be completed by member/s of the health care team or you when admitted to hospital)

TITLE	NAME	CONTACT NUMBER
Surgeon		
Resident Doctor		
Anaesthetist		
GP		
Nurse Unit Manager		
Breast Care Nurse		
Physiotherapist		
Social Worker		
Other		

KEY CONTACT PERSON

(To be completed by a member of the health care team before you are discharged from hospital)

Following discharge from hospital your key contact person for support and ongoing needs is:

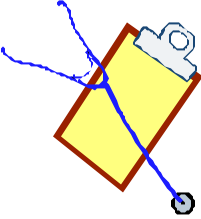



TITLE	NAME	CONTACT NUMBER

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

If you are having problems contacting your local breast care nurse, contact:

- **The Regional Breast Care Nurse** - Ph: **(03) 5441 6850** between 9am - 5pm
- **Cancer Council of Victoria** - Ph: **13 11 20 (toll free)** between 9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri.
- You will be given a list and contact numbers of support groups & trained volunteers available in your area.



DAY	Before your operation	After your operation	Day 1 after your operation	The following days after your operation
<p>Treatment Observations</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may be instructed to go to either your GP's surgery or the hospital's pre-admission clinic to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> blood tests; a heart tracing (ECG); a chest x-ray, and other tests, as requested by your doctor Your doctor will examine you and explain your operation and anticipated recovery. You will be given an appropriate package of information about breast surgery. Your breast care nurse will visit you to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide further information/education about your surgery and treatment following your surgery; arrange a visit following your surgery, and arrange for a Breast Care Support Service volunteer to visit you, if you desire. Your physiotherapist may see you to assess your arm movement, and explain about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arm and breathing exercises to be done after your operation, and lymphoedema (a problem which sometimes occurs following surgery). Your occupational therapist may visit you to talk about your needs after discharge. On admission to hospital you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> weight will be measured; urine will be tested; blood pressure, pulse, temperature and respiration will be recorded, and arm girth of both arms will be measured (if the glands under your arm are being removed). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and respirations will be measured regularly for the first 24 hours and then less often during the rest of your stay in hospital. You will receive pain relief for the first 24–48 hrs, if required. This may be given in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IV analgesia (through a drip); patient controlled analgesia (PCA) where you control the amount of pain relief you need by use of a special pump connected to your drip; or oral analgesia (tablets/syrup). For the rest of the days in hospital you may have tablets for pain relief as required. Please let your nurse know if you have any pain or discomfort. You may have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a drip in your arm to give you fluid and any medication if needed; one or two drain tubes (about 1cm in diameter) coming from your wound site which help to drain out excess fluids. The nurses will measure frequently the amount of drainage coming out and change the bottles as required. The drain tubes will be removed as ordered by your doctors, usually when drainage is minimal, and a dressing over your wound that will be checked daily and changed, as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be seen by your doctors daily. Your: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> physiotherapist will see you, and breast care nurse may visit you as needed (please discuss any needs or worries with her). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> doctor/s will explain the findings from the pathology results performed during surgery and any further treatment or follow up care as needed, such as oncology, radiotherapy and breast reconstruction. The Breast Care Nurse will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reinforce what your doctor told you; answer any questions/queries; provide discharge education; discuss a prosthesis & provide a temporary one, if appropriate; organise appointments for fitting of a permanent prosthesis after discharge; arrange for a Breast Care Support Service volunteer to visit you, if not already arranged, and if you desire; provide information on the local Breast Care Support Group; and provide advice on care of the affected arm & the possibility of developing lymphoedema. You can expect some bruising to appear on your chest/breast. Please notify a member of the health care team if the wound becomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tight; swollen, and/or painful.
<p>Diet Elimination Activity</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before the operation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform your doctor if you are on any medication and he/she will advise you about which medications to continue or discontinue. At home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep as active as possible; you will not be able to eat or drink for 6 hours before the operation; don't drink any alcohol or smoke for 24 hours before your operation, and shower before you go to hospital (do not use deodorant). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> need to rest in bed for 4 hours after your operation; be able to drink 1-2 hours after your operation, be able to eat a light meal (as tolerated) about 4 hours after your operation and when fully awake; be able to go to the toilet, with help from the nurse; have a wash, and have family members/support person present after you wake up. Consider restricting visitors to close family members/support person at this time. It is a good idea, before your operation to provide nursing staff with a list of people you would like to see. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be able to eat and drink normally; be able to go to the toilet as desired; require some assistance from your nurse to wash; have limited movement in your arm, (this will improve with the exercises as instructed by the physiotherapist), and feel emotional, anxious and/or concerned, if so, please talk to a member of the care team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be independent and self caring (but remember that assistance is available if needed); and/or have some discomfort associated with the surgery. You will be able to have visitors, unless you request otherwise.
<p>Discharge Preparation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your Breast Care Nurse will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide further information about future treatment; make referrals when practical assistance is required, eg with child minding, travel concerns etc, and provide emotional assistance for you and your family. If you have concerns please discuss them with your doctor/nurse/Breast Care Nurse, so that help can be arranged. Concerns may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managing when you go home, eg. showering, cooking, housework, home maintenance, child care; financial difficulties; and/or any other problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your breast care nurse will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide further information about future treatment; make referrals when practical assistance is required, eg with child minding, travel concerns etc, and provide emotional assistance for you and your family. If you have concerns please discuss them with your doctor/nurse/Breast Care Nurse so that help can be arranged. Concerns may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managing when you go home, eg. showering, cooking, housework, home maintenance, child care; financial difficulties, and/or any other problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your physiotherapist will provide some arm exercises for you to follow at home. If it is decided that you will go home before the drainage tubes are removed, arrangements will be made for home nursing services, eg district nursing, to visit. Your nurse/Breast Care Nurse will organise this for you. Please discuss with your doctor/nurse/Breast Care Nurse if you have any further problems or concerns about managing at home after discharge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before you go home you should get: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> appropriate follow up appointments; a letter for your local doctor; medication to take at home; instructions to follow at home; information from the breast care nurse; information from the physiotherapist; information from the occupational therapist, and a temporary prosthesis to wear from the breast care nurse, if required. You will have to organise someone to collect you from hospital on discharge. Please discuss with staff any further problems or concerns about managing at home after discharge.