

## **POST-SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS: MASTOPEXY**

### **TYPICAL POST-OPERATIVE SYMPTOMS**

Typical symptoms of mastopexy surgery and signs to watch for following surgery include the following:

**Tightness in the chest region and stiffness; Tingling, burning or intermittent shooting pain:**

These are normal experiences as the skin, tissue and sensory nerves heal. Pain medication and muscle relaxants will help you cope with any discomfort. **CONSISTENT SHARP PAIN SHOULD BE REPORTED TO OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.**

**Hypersensitivity of nipples or lack of sensitivity:**

This is normal and will gradually resolve over time. You may also experience a small amount of fluid or milk seeping through the nipples. **IF THIS BECOMES PAINFUL OR EXCESSIVE NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.**

**Shiny skin or any itchy feeling:**

Swelling can cause the breasts skin to appear shiny. As the healing process advances, you may also find a mild to severe itchy feeling of the breasts. An antihistamine like Benadryl can help to alleviate severe, constant itchiness. **IF THE SKIN BECOMES RED AND HOT TO THE TOUCH, CONTACT OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.**

**Asymmetry, the breasts look different, or heal differently:**

Breasts may look or feel quite different from one another in the days and weeks following surgery. This is normal. Although no two breasts in nature or following surgery are perfectly symmetrical, time should produce breasts that are similar in shape, position and size.

**CALL THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:**

- A high fever (over 101°), severe nausea and vomiting, continued dizziness or incoherent behavior, such as hallucinations.
- Any pain that cannot be controlled by your pain medication.
- Bright red skin that is hot to the touch.
- Excessive bleeding or fluid seeping through the incisions.
- If one breast quickly becomes larger than the other or bruising is localized to one breast or region of the chest.

### **DAY OF SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS**

When you are ready for discharge from the surgery center, you will be released to the care of your support person. **All of these instructions should be reviewed by and clear to the adult who will be with you for the 24 hours following surgery.**

- **Rest, but not bed rest.** While rest is important in the early stages of healing, it is also important that you stay active after surgery. As you recover, during waking hours, spend about 10 minutes every 2 hours engaged in light walking. It is fine to go outside and walk a bit if the weather is nice. Walking is important to maintain good blood flow in your legs and to keep your lungs inflated and working well.
- **Recline with your head and chest slightly elevated above your lower body.** This is a good position for most patients. However, you may rest in any position that is comfortable, even in a flat, supine position.
- **Ice packs.** Cold or ice packs may help reduce swelling and can provide some comfort. Use bags of frozen peas or crushed ice in a zip lock baggie covered by a cloth. This should help, not hurt. If the ice feels uncomfortable, stop it or do not use it as often. Ice is not used on breast lift or breast reduction patients. There is little benefit, in terms of swelling, to continue icing after 24 hours from surgery. But, if it provides comfort, it is fine to continue icing in the days after surgery.
- **Good nutrition.** Fluids are important following surgery. Consume non-carbonated, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free beverages including fruit juices, sports drinks, water, milk and yogurt drinks. You should drink at least 8 ounces of fluid every 2-3 hours. Nausea is common after surgery, so start with soft, bland, nutritious food for the first 24 hours.
- **Take all medication as prescribed and record your doses on the Breast Surgery Medication Dosing Chart.** But, if you are sleeping, you should not be awakened to take narcotics or muscle relaxants. These medications can make you even sleepier and over-sedated. Over-sedation can be dangerous and must be avoided.
- **No Smoking.** Smoking reduces blood flow in you skin and adversely affects wound healing. We advise you not to smoke at all during at least the first two weeks after surgery. Second-hand smoke is also harmful and should be avoided.
- **Travel limitations.** In most cases, you should plan to remain within a reasonable traveling distance of our office for at least a few days after surgery, in case you develop a problem requiring emergent or urgent attention. This is not the time travel far away to visit relatives or take a vacation.
- **Relax.** Do not engage in stressful activities. Do not lift anything greater than 25 pounds. Just take care of yourself and let others tend to you.

## **ONE TO SEVEN DAYS FOLLOWING SURGERY**

During this time you will feel better with each day that passes. Begin to ease into your daily activities, as tolerated.

- **Remove all of your gauze dressings and shower 24 hours after surgery.** Take a warm (not hot) shower. All dressings should be removed. Water, soapy water, and shampoo water can run over your incisions. Do not soap or rub your incisions. Pat the wounds gently with a towel to dry off. Your

wounds may seep a small amount of fluid and blood during the first two days after surgery. Do not remove any steri-strips or surgical glue that may be covering your incisions. The tape strips will fall off in about 10-14 days. Trim the tape strips back as they curl up on the end. If tissue glue was used, it will become gummy and come off within 2-3 weeks after surgery.

- **Do not take a bath or soak in a hot tub or spa.**
- **Wear your surgical bra, unless it is uncomfortable for you.** It is not necessary to wear it around the clock unless you desire the extra support. A camisole with bralette is often most comfortable. No under wire or push-up bras should be worn until approved by us.
- **Take all medications as prescribed on your Breast Surgery Medication Dosing Chart.** Take your pain medication and muscle relaxants only as needed. You may wish to switch from prescription pain medication to acetaminophen (Tylenol) as your pain level decreases. Avoid aspirin and aspirin-like products for two weeks- this includes ibuprofen (Motrin) and naprosen (Aleve).
- **Do not resume any exercise, other than regular walking.** Walking is essential every day to prevent the formation of blood clots. Continue to pamper yourself. Try to avoid straining. No matter how good you feel, do not clean the house or do yard work, etc! We do not want you to bleed or cause any unnecessary swelling and/or bruising.
- **Maintain a healthy diet.** Do not consume alcohol while taking your pain medication.
- **Constipation.** Due to the narcotic pain medication, the gastrointestinal tract will slow after surgery and constipation can occur. The sooner narcotics are stopped, the less of a problem this may become. Also, the prescribed stool softener is helpful to limit this problem. After a few days, it is appropriate to use over-the-counter laxatives in either liquid, tablet or suppository form. Milk of Magnesia and Dulcolax tablets or suppositories are appropriate treatments.
- **Expect weight gain.** You will temporarily gain weight after surgery. This is caused by water retention, which is a normal hormonal response to the stress of surgery. Your face and hands may even swell due to this fluid retention. Don't be concerned with this. Indeed, we advise that you do not even trouble yourself by checking your weight after surgery. The fluid will be mobilized and excreted by your kidneys in 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- **Resume driving when are physically ready and off narcotics and muscle relaxants.** You must not drive while taking muscle relaxants or narcotics. And, you must have adequate arm range of motion, strength, alertness and stamina to resume driving. The determination of when you are ready to drive is up to you, keeping the above issues in mind. Most patients can resume driving 5-7 days after surgery.

**Your first post-operative visit is scheduled for: \_\_\_\_\_**

## **ONE TO FOUR WEEKS FOLLOWING SURGERY**

- **Do not smoke.** While incisions may have sealed, smoking deprives your body of necessary oxygen that can result in poorly healed, wide, raised scars.
- **Begin scar management.** We will instruct you on how, and when, to begin scar management. You may use vitamin E oil, Aloe Vera, or an over-the-counter product (such as Mederma) to facilitate deep massage of your scars.
- **Do not lift anything greater than 25 pounds.** No tennis, golf, softball or other sports with similar swinging motions. You may resume light exercise three weeks after surgery. (i.e. walking on the treadmill, exercise bike or elliptical machine )
- **Intimate relations.** You may resume sexual activity as your body allows. Typically, with caution, you may have sexual activity 2-3 weeks after surgery. The general limitations in physical activity listed above should be followed. Let common sense be your guide.
- **No under wire or push-up bras until approved by us.**
- **You may sleep flat.** However, do not sleep on your abdomen. If you are a side sleeper, a soft pillow under your mid-back and shoulders may offer more comfort and support than a single pillow under your head.
- **Practice good sun protection.** Do not expose your breasts to direct sunlight or tanning beds. If you are outdoors, apply at least an SPF 30 to the chest area at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. Your chest region and breast skin are highly susceptible to sunburn, and the formation of irregular, darkened pigmentation.
- **Do not take a bath or hot tub, unless your wounds are completely healed.** Once the tape strips or glue are off, and if your wounds are completely sealed, then you may soak your wounds in a bath, pool or hot tub.
- **Post-operative follow-up visit.** We will see you around 4-6 weeks after surgery for a routine follow-up visit in our office. We will happily see you sooner, as needed.
- **Support.** As you heal, support from your family and friends is very helpful, but because they may not understand what constitutes a normal post-operative course, their comments may unintentionally create concern for you. We will tell you honestly how you are doing and what we expect your results to be. Please trust our knowledge and experience when we discuss your progress with you.
- **Healing.** Everyone has the capacity to heal. However, this capacity depends on a number of factors such as your genetic background, your overall state of health and lifestyle (exercise, diet, smoking, drinking, etc.). We can facilitate, but not accelerate the healing process. Please take an active role in your recovery, but, at the same time, understand the importance of following our instructions. Your cooperation and close attention is very important in helping you avoid preventable setbacks and allows you to recover as smoothly as possible.

- **Discussing your surgery.** Although plastic surgery has certainly become a common topic of conversation, your friends may still be reluctant to bring it up and discuss what they believe is a private matter. Patients occasionally feel upset the “no one noticed” or “said anything”. If you feel comfortable discussing your surgical experience, do so openly. When people ask how are you, respond saying “I feel wonderful, I just had cosmetic breast surgery and I am recovering”. This lets people know that they may talk freely with you. Often, when patients are open, they find that their friends are very interested in discussing the subject. Such open human interaction can help provide you with catharsis and emotional support after surgery.
- **Depression.** Your body (including your brain) is exposed to great amounts of physiologic and mental stress after surgery. This is caused by a number of factors. Your hormone and steroid levels are elevated and you are taking medications (especially the narcotic and muscle relaxants) that directly affect your physiology and psychology. Your sleep cycle is probably disrupted, so you are likely sleep deprived. All of these factors, combined with the emotions and expectations you have invested in your surgery, can lead to a brief “let down” or “depression” after mastopexy surgery. Some patients may subconsciously have expected to feel or look better “instantly”, even though they rationally understood this would not be the case. Patients commonly question their decision to have cosmetic surgery during the first few post-operative days. As healing occurs, and as your physiology, stress level and sleep return to normal, these thoughts usually disappear. If you feel mildly depressed, understanding that this is a natural phase of the healing process may help you cope. If this happens to you, we want you to discuss it with us, especially if depression is severe.
- **Patience.** Please understand that it takes of minimum of six weeks to see the results of surgery coming into final form and, in many cases, your final results will not be fully realized for up to six months after surgery. It simply takes time for the swelling to resolve and your tissues to stretch and soften. This means that time is your ally and that tissues and scars will likely improve with time. Understanding this now will help temper your expectations, hone your patience and make for a more pleasurable recovery.

## **SIX WEEKS FOLLOWING SURGERY**

Healing will progress and your breasts will settle into a more final shape and position.

- **You may ease into your regular fitness routine.** However, realize that your upper body may require some time to return to prior strength.
- **Discomfort or tightness and tingling will resolve.** Any lingering nipple sensitivity or lack of sensation should begin to greatly improve.
- **Practice good sun protection.** Do not expose your breasts to direct sunlight or tanning beds. If you are outdoors, apply at least an SPF 30 to the chest area at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. Your chest region and breast skin are highly susceptible to sunburn, and the formation of irregular, darkened pigmentation.

- **May resume swimming and hot tub activities as desired.** As long as your wounds are completely sealed.

**YOUR FIRST YEAR**

- **Usual pain.** The nerves around the breasts may be irritated for up to a year after surgery. Don't be surprised if you experience occasional shooting pain, tingling or "electricity" in one or both breasts. This typically resolves as the inflammation decreases and the nerves fully heal. However, persistent or severe pain should be reported to us.
- **Practice monthly breast self exams.**
- **Continue healthy nutrition, fitness and sun protection.**
- **Your scars will continue to mature and settle.** If your scars become raised, red, thickened, or wide contact our office. Early intervention is important to achieving well-healed scars. Scars generally mature to fine incision lines in one to two years after surgery.
- **A follow up visit with us will be scheduled for approximately three and six months after surgery.** However, you may call our office at any time if you have concerns or need additional follow-up visits.
- **Mammograms.** You should resume yearly mammograms, if that is your schedule due to age or other recommendations by your primary physicians. Even if you are not on schedule for a mammogram, it is worthwhile to obtain a new "baseline" mammogram within one year after surgery.

**Your body will change with age.** The appearance of your breasts will change too. Contact our office with any of your questions or concerns at any time.

**I have read all six pages of the document *Post-operative Instructions: Mastopexy* and understand all of the instructions. I understand that following these instructions is solely my responsibility. I understand that it is also my responsibility to ask Dr. Connall and his staff any questions I have related to these instructions or about my procedure, health and healing.**

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**Patient Signature**

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**Date**

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**Patient Printed Name**

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**Witness and Date**