

## Patient information

# Mastectomy (removal of the breast) and axillary surgery

After your visit to the Outpatient Clinic, you may have some questions about your forthcoming admission and operation. The following information may be of some help, but please feel free to telephone with any queries.

### Coming into hospital

You will be seen in pre-assessment prior to your admission. You will be seen by a doctor or nurse and given a full examination to ensure you are fit for a general anaesthetic. The doctor or nurse will organise any tests thought to be necessary.

### Admission or day of your operation

You will be asked to attend ward F5 on the day of your surgery but you could be moved to another ward if a bed is not available there. You will be advised at pre-operative assessment when to stop eating and drinking, usually six hours prior to surgery. This means no food, dairy products including milky tea / coffee, chewing gum or boiled sweets. You are allowed to have sips of plain water up until two hours before surgery. Pre-assessment will also advise which medication to take or omit.

We do not routinely use pre-medication.

Any questions you have with reference to your anaesthetic or operation can be addressed at your pre assessment appointment or on the day of surgery.

### After your operation

The wound may be covered by a dressing or surgical glue. It must be kept dry for five days. You can then shower normally but do not soak the wound until completely healed, normally about two weeks.

The side on which the breast has been removed will be flat with a horizontal scar across it. If you do not have a dressing on your wound, surgical glue will have been applied and should be kept dry for five days.

There will be some discomfort to the affected area but if you experience pain please ask the ward staff for painkillers.

Please bring a comfortable non-underwired bra with you into hospital. The Breast Care Nurse will fit you with a soft temporary breast form before you go home. Your permanent breast form will be fitted at least six weeks after surgery, an appointment for which you will be given before leaving hospital.

## **Going home**

You may be able to go home the same day as the surgery. Before you are able to go home we will need to check the following:

- You have had something to eat and drink and do not feel nauseous
- You have passed urine
- Your observations are stable (temperature, blood pressure and pulse)
- Your dressing is clean and dry
- Transport home is available as you are not permitted to drive
- You have a responsible adult to stay with you for the first 24 hours
- Any pre-existing medical conditions are stable
- You are pain free and feel well enough

If you have any concerns about going home or any other issues please discuss with the Breast Care Nurses or the ward staff.

You will be fitted with a soft prosthesis before your discharge.

You will be given an outpatient appointment to attend for results of the surgery prior to leaving hospital.

You may feel tired for the first couple of weeks so it may be helpful to have someone to help with household activities. Increase your activity level gradually.

You should be able to drive after about two to four weeks, when you feel comfortable behind the wheel with your seatbelt on, and are able to perform an emergency stop safely. Check with your insurance for clauses covering health and operations.

Return to work when you feel able, or when treatment is complete.

If you do keep fit or swimming you should be able to return to these activities when your wound has healed. Build these activities up gradually.

Sexual activity — you are going through a stressful time and are recovering from surgery. Talk to your partner about how you are feeling to avoid any misunderstanding. See Breast Care Care booklet: 'Sexuality, Intimacy and Breast Cancer' for further information.

## **If you have any concerns please contact:**

### **Breast Care Nursing Team**

Telephone: 01284 713281

Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

**Donations in support of our work may be made to the West Suffolk Hospital Breast Cancer Fund.**

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)*

<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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