

Patient information

Axillary node clearance

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.

This is an operation to remove all of the glands under the armpit. Breast Cancer sometimes spreads to these glands, and if this has happened it may be beneficial to remove all the nodes from your armpit. This gives us important information to plan your further treatments.

This is usually done through one incision which will be just below the armpit.

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 the operation

On rare occasions you may have one drainage tube in situ and a date will be arranged for removal. The wound may be covered by a dressing. As soon as you feel well enough, you will be able to eat/drink normally and be up and about, and go home the same day or stay overnight.

The BCN's will visit you with post-operative information, and an appointment for two weeks.

You may experience numbness or pain, restricted arm movement and shoulder stiffness, seroma (pocket of fluid), infection, increased risk of lymphoedema or arm swelling. These are common side effects of this operation. Please contact BCN's if you have any concerns.

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 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.

Swimming is a good form of exercise: try it after about four/eight weeks if your wound has healed. It is possible for fluid to build up in the area of the operation. If this happens it can be easily drained. If you experience any swelling, leakage or increased discomfort in the wound area please contact your GP or Breast Care Nurses.

If you have any concerns please contact:

Breast Care Nursing Team

Telephone: 01284 713281, Monday — 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>



© West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust