

Patient information

Breast care: general advice following surgery

You may receive an appointment to see Dr Moody or Dr Woodward, who are Oncology Specialists.

Please do not be concerned as this is part of the routine management of breast cancer.

Helpful hints for when you go home

- You will need plenty of rest but you should increase your activity gradually – listen to your body!
- To reduce the chance of developing lymphoedema (swelling of the arm) on the affected side, avoid carrying heavy loads - even after you have recovered. Take it steady and build up gradually. Avoid strenuous housework.
- You should be able to drive after about 2 to 4 weeks, when you feel comfortable behind the wheel with your seat belt on, and would be able to perform an emergency stop. Check your insurance for clauses covering health and operations.
- You should be able to return to work once your wound has completely healed and you feel well enough, usually 2 to 4 weeks depending on your job. If you are having further treatment you may need to be off work for longer.
- You can shower as normal, but do not soak the wound until it is completely healed. If your wound is glued you need to keep it dry for 5 days.
- Continue with your exercises as advised by the Breast Care Nurses (some operations will not need special exercises) until you achieve normal range of

movement. This is especially important if you are going to have radiotherapy, as you will be required to fully raise your arm for this treatment.

- If you do 'keep fit' or swimming you should be able to return to these when your wound has healed, but take it steady and build up gradually.
- If we have used the Sentimag method to identify your lymph nodes this may cause some long-term brownish skin colouration.
- Sexual activity – you are going through a stressful time and may be recovering from surgery. Talk to your partner about how you are feeling to avoid any misunderstanding. See Breast Cancer Care booklet: 'Sexuality, Intimacy and Breast Cancer' for further information.
- Bruising is common and will completely resolve, but may take some weeks.
- If the wound becomes red, inflamed or painful this may be a sign of infection. This may settle down, but if you are at all concerned contact your own doctor or Breast Care Nurse.
- Serum is a clear straw coloured fluid produced by all wounds. A seroma is a collection of this fluid under the skin of the wound and is normally absorbed by the body. However, if you notice a large soft swelling under your arm or in the wound, together with discomfort, you should contact the ward or Breast Care Nurse for further advice. See Breast Cancer Care booklet: 'Your Operation and Recovery' for more detail.
- The aftermath of breast cancer surgery can leave you emotionally and physically drained. Allow yourself time to come to terms with your emotions. If you have any further worries please do not hesitate to contact the Breast Care Nurses.

If you have any queries about your treatment, or worries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Breast Care Nursing Team

Telephone: 01284 713281

Monday to Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm

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>

