

## HAND & PLASTIC SURGERY CENTRE, P.L.C.

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*Surgery of the Hand & Upper Extremity*  
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### **BREAST RECONSTRUCTION-PERMANENT IMPLANT POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS**

**NORMAL SYMPTOMS:** It is normal to experience, bruising, swelling, and some degree of discomfort following surgery. These conditions will lessen as your healing progresses.

**DRAIN CARE:** You may or may not have drains present after surgery. Drains are used to limit fluid collections. There is always some swelling and even bruising. The drain entrance sites may be padded for comfort. The hospital staff will teach you how to strip or milk the drains as well as measure and record their output daily prior to discharge. Bring the drain record provided on the backside of your drain care sheet with you to all office visits after surgery. See drain care sheet.

**SUPPORT BRA:** You will need to wear your support bra at all times for the next 4-6 weeks following surgery except when bathing or laundering the bra. The bra will help support your breasts during the healing process. After your 1st appointment you may begin wearing a sports bra or continue to use the support bra you received after surgery.

**DRESSINGS/SHOWERING:** You may shower 24 hours after your operation. Steri-strips will stay on for two weeks and gradually fall off. If they are still in place after two weeks, you can remove them. Clean with mild soap and water. Gently pat dry and cover with gauze dressings to control drainage from your incisions. Avoid washing with soap around the drainage tube exit site/s. Water may run over the exit sites. Due to decreased sensation, be very cautious with the water temperature.

**SOAKING:** Do NOT get into a bath tub, hot tub or swimming pool for at least 8 weeks following surgery because soaking can cause wound healing issues.

**ACTIVITY:** When you go home, take it easy for the first week. Avoid heavy lifting for a few weeks. As you begin to feel stronger, gradually increase how much you do, stopping when you get tired or if discomfort increases. We encourage you not to do any aerobic exercise until you are about 4 week's post-op. Sexual activity: as soon as you are comfortable with it.

**DRIVING:** You may begin driving after your 1st post-op appointment ONLY if you are no longer taking prescription pain medication. You should feel comfortable enough to be able to wrench the steering wheel from side to side if you need.

**RETURNING TO WORK:** Depending on what your job entails, returning to work will be different for everyone. Generally, our patients are off from work for 2-3 weeks. You can discuss this issue at the time of your first post-op visit and get the paperwork that is needed at that time.

**ARM MOVEMENT:** It is important to get the arm on the mastectomy side moving and progressively getting higher up in the air as each day goes by. A suggested exercise would be to stand about 2 feet from the wall and "walk" your fingers up the wall. Do this exercise facing the wall and then to the side with the operated side toward the wall. Keep track of your progress by marking the wall with a piece of tape at the highest point you are able to reach. If you are not progressing well, please call our office and talk with your doctor's nurse.

**SCARS:** Scars take at least 1 year to fade and flatten. During this time, it is better that you protect them from the sun. NO exposure for the first 3 months. Even through a bathing suit, a good deal of sunlight can reach the skin and cause damage. It is imperative that you wear a sunscreen with a skin-protective factor (SPF) of at least 30 at all times. Scars look worse before they get better.

**NAUSEA/CONSTIPATION:** It is important for you to have someone stay with you the day of the procedure. Nausea and/or vomiting may occur while taking oral antibiotics or pain medications. Should this happen, take your medications with food. If you experience constipation, we suggest eating foods that are high in fiber and drink plenty of water (You may try over-the-counter stool softeners). Call our office if these symptoms persist

**WHEN TO CALL (616) 459-4131:**

- If you develop significant bruising across the chest
- If you experience a significant increase in pain and tenderness
- If you develop a temperature of 100.5 ° F or greater
- Pus-like drainage
- If you develop redness (like a sunburn) and warmth around your incisions

Please remember that for the vast majority of patients the goal is significant improvement, not perfection. Please call our office at (616) 459-4131 should you have any questions or concerns.

**POST-OP APPOINTMENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRESCRIBED MEDICATION(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

Please take Narcotic/OTC medication as directed and as needed. DO NOT drive or operate machinery if you are taking a narcotic. If you are prescribed antibiotics, take as directed until gone. Taking an incomplete course can lead to recurrence of infection. Please take antibiotics with food as this may cause upset stomach. Please ask physician before you begin taking aspirin, motrin/ibuprofen or other anti-inflammatory medications, as these can increase risk of bleeding. \*\*IF NAUSEATED, TRY NON-ACIDIC LIQUIDS, DRY TOAST OR OTHER BLAND FOODS\*\*

**Patient Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hospital Staff Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Physician Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_