

## **Breast Reconstruction**

### **To and From Surgery**

Plan for someone to drive you to and from the hospital, we recommend that you have someone watch over you at home as well. Do not drive for one week after surgery or while on pain medications.

### **Diet**

Before surgery, you are required to not eat or drink anything for eight hours. After surgery, be sure to drink enough water to prevent dehydration.

### **Physical Activity**

After surgery you may feel tired be sure to get some rest until the effects of the anesthesia have worn off. If at any time you feel dizzy after surgery lie down until you feel normal again. You may engage in normal activity, but do not do anything to bring your blood pressure too high for at least a week. This will cause bleeding in the operated area which may result in a hematoma, and increase your risk of capsular contracture if you are having an implant or tissue expander placed. You will feel very sore; the pain pump assists with some of the discomfort. The pain pump is filled with marcaine which helps to numb the pocket.

For the first three weeks after your surgery do not raise your arms above a 90 degree angle to prevent over stretching too early. Be sure not to lift anything greater than 15 pounds within those three weeks. After three weeks you are unrestricted.

For TRAM flap patients: You will need to walk in a slightly hunched over position, bent slightly at the waist, for five days. Your sleeping position should have you slightly flexed at the waist on your back or side, also for 5 days. These precautions are designed to minimize tension on the wounds. You will also be restricted from any heavy lifting for six weeks (anything greater than 15-20 pounds).

### **What to Wear**

You will not be raising your arms afterwards, so be sure to wear comfortable clothing such as a loose fitting zip up and sweat pants to make it easier to get dressed. You can pin your drains to your clothing as well. If you go to the website [softeeusa.com](http://softeeusa.com) you can purchase special after-surgery camisoles that have built in pockets for the drains.

### **Medication**

Discontinue taking aspirin and Vitamin E one week before surgery (refer to the aspirin instruction sheet). Do not resume taking any aspirin, ibuprofen, or Alleve until 5 days after the surgery. Get your prescriptions filled a few days in advance to take after surgery. Take your antibiotics until the bottle is gone. For pain, Dr. Doezie will usually prescribe a muscle relaxer (methocarbamol) and a narcotic such as Vicodin, Darvocet, or Percocet. During the first few days, it is generally better to take the muscle relaxer first and then supplement with the narcotic. Each person experiences pain differently, but most patients

experience the most pain the first day following surgery.

You should know that having implants requires you to take antibiotics anytime you have dental work done to reduce the chance of an implant infection. After your surgery, you should wait three months before going to the dentist. Call our office if you need a prescription for antibiotics.

### **Hospital**

Most patients who have a reconstruction with tissue expanders will stay 1-3 days in the hospital. TRAM flap reconstruction patients usually stay 3-5 days. Dr. Doezie will be seeing you daily while in the hospital.

### **Wound Care & Bathing**

Wounds on the breast are closed with buried, absorbable, stitches. You will also have tape strips across your incision sites; Dr. Doezie will remove them at the appropriate time (about a week after surgery). When you leave the hospital you will have an ace bandage wrapped around your chest. You may remove this as you need to, but most patients leave it on until the first follow-up visit in the office. Please do not ice the wound or area near the wound unless given clearance by Dr. Doezie.

For TRAM flap patients: You may leave the hospital with an abdominal binder (large elastic bandage). The purpose for the binder is as a lever to aid you in sitting up and moving your torso. (It is not keeping the stitched wounds together!) The binder may be worn as long as you like, but for at least a week. Surgical wounds will be sealed with clear plastic tape. It is normal for bloody fluid to accumulate under the tape or leak out from underneath it. There will also be bruising and some swelling at the surgical sites and because of this it is normal to feel like your pants are actually tighter! Most swelling will be gone after one or two months. The only stitches that need to be removed are around the belly button; the rest are all absorbable.

Showering/Bathing: While your pain pump catheters and drains are in place, do not take a shower in order to prevent bacteria from entering the pocket. You may have your hair washed but be sure not to get the tube site wet. By the third day your pain pump should be empty and you can come to our office to have it removed.

While the pain pump or drains are in place, fluid usually leaks onto your clothing. Do not be alarmed this is normal. This is why we recommend you wear something you don't mind getting soiled. It will take at least a month before all the swelling is gone. Most, if not all, patients complain about some sort of fullness or discomfort below the arm pit region adjacent to the side of the breast, this is also normal and will resolve. Also, if you have tissue expanders it is normal to see bulges early in the process where the expander is folded because it is not completely inflated yet. These will eventually go away as you go through the expansion process.

Drains: You will have a drain at each breast and you will need to record at least twice a day how much each one drains. To measure this, uncork the stopper at the top of the bulb and estimate how much is in the bulb by the markings on the outside. To activate the drain, squeeze the bulb and replace the stopper. Notify Dr. Doezie if the bulb will not hold suction (remain collapsed) even with repeated activations. The drains will be removed when the output drops below 40cc within a 24 hour period. Most drains remain for an average of 7 to 10 days, but the maximum

time is two weeks. While your drains are in place you may not shower in order to prevent bacteria from entering through the drain site. Bloody fluid often leaks from where the drains exit; do not be alarmed as this is normal. If the bandage gets wet you may change it as needed. Once the drains are removed put antibiotic ointment over the hole and a new bandage at least once a day until it has healed over and is no longer raw.

### **Follow-Up Visits**

Dr. Doezie will visit you in the hospital the day after surgery and tell you when to make an appointment at our office.

If you are having immediate reconstruction with implants he will show you how to move the implants correctly. You will need to bring someone (i.e. your husband, friend, etc.) to do this for you as it will be uncomfortable to do yourself the first week or so. We recommend that you take your pain medication and muscle relaxant 45 minutes before your visit to minimize any discomfort. You will do the exercises twice a day holding each position for ten seconds. Doing these exercises will help prevent capsular contracture.

Make an appointment for three days after your surgery to have the pain pump removed. Dr. Doezie will let you know when to make the rest of your follow-up visits.

Once you begin the tissue expansion process you will come in every two weeks to have them filled with about 100cc of sterile saline. Dr. Doezie will find the port on the expander with a magnet, numb the area with a fine needle (most patients cannot feel this anyway because of loss of sensation), sterilize the area and start the expansion by inserting a needle and injecting fluid. Patients usually do not complain of pain during this process, but have only some pressure from the enlarging expander.

### **Exchanging Tissue Expanders for Implants**

Once you have decided on the volume you like, Dr. Doezie will over-expand by 100cc. He does this so there is more room for the implant to move around and to make it softer. After the over-expansion you will have to wait about a month before you can have your surgery to exchange the expander for your silicone implants. This is to allow enough time for the tissue to stretch completely.

This procedure of exchanging tissue expanders for implants is a simple outpatient procedure done at a surgery center rather than a hospital. Dr. Doezie will use the same incisions from your original surgery. Patients report only having minimal soreness afterwards.

You will come into our office the day after surgery for a follow up visit with Dr. Doezie; he will show you how to move your implants correctly. You will do the exercises twice a day holding each position for ten seconds. Doing these exercises will help prevent capsular contracture.

### **Nipple Reconstruction**

This is the final step of your reconstruction process. You can decide whether you want

them or not; it is very personal decision for each patient. This is done in our office procedure room where Dr. Doezie numbs an area of skin on the breast and creates a nipple mound. After about three weeks you can have tattooing done for the areola where you can pick out the color you would like.