



Discharge Instructions for Mastectomy or Breast Lumpectomy

You are being treated for breast cancer or precancer. The cancer or precancerous tissue was removed with surgery. This may have been done with a lumpectomy. Or it may have been with a total mastectomy. A lumpectomy means that the tumor and a bit of tissue around it were removed. Lymph nodes in your armpit may also have been removed. A mastectomy means that all of the breast tissue and maybe nearby lymph nodes have been removed.

Activity

- Ask for help with chores and errands while you recover.
- Do not lift anything heavy until your health care provider says it's OK.
- Do not vacuum or do active or strenuous housework until your health care provider says it's OK.
- Do the range-of-motion exercises that you learned in the hospital.

Home Care

- Take pain medicine as directed.
- Keep your incisions clean and dry.
- Check your incisions daily for signs of infection. These include redness, swelling and drainage. They also include the edges of an incision opening up.
- Follow your health care provider's instructions about bathing or showering.
- If your health care provider says it's OK, wash your incisions gently. Use mild soap and warm water. Pat dry.
- Don't soak in a tub, hot tub or pool until your health care provider says it's OK.
- Eat normal meals as soon as you feel able. Stick to a healthy, well-balanced diet.

Follow-up

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by your health care provider. If you had a mastectomy, you may have choices for reconstructive breast surgery or a prosthesis. Ask to talk to someone who can tell you more about your choices.

When to call your health care provider

Call your health care provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Chills
- Drainage from your incisions
- Swelling around your incisions
- Increasing pain in or around your incisions
- Swelling in your arm or hand on the surgery side

Know what problems to watch for and when you need to call your health care providers. Also be sure you know how to get help after office hours and on weekends and holidays.

