

# Patient Information

## After Care Following Breast Surgery



Medway Maritime – Making a Difference  
Great Healthcare for a Growing Community

## **Lymphoedema Risk**

If you have had surgery to remove some of the glands under your arm, you are at a lifetime risk of developing lymphoedema (swelling) in that arm. There are some simple preventative measures to reduce the risk:

- Do not use affected arm for injection, blood tests or blood pressure readings
- Do not use a 'wet razor' for underarm hair removal. Use hair removal cream or an electric razor.
- Wear gardening gloves for gardening
- Protect your arm with a high factor sun cream
- Use clippers for trimming nails

Always treat cuts/grazes/burns promptly. Wash the area under running water, apply an antiseptic cream and cover with a plaster/dressing. If signs of infection occur contact your GP for antibiotics immediately.

## **Ladies who have had a mastectomy**

The breast care nurses or ward staff will fit you with a soft temporary prosthesis prior to discharge.

Permanent fitting with a silicone breast form is available approximately 6 weeks after surgery or when healing is complete, the breast care nurses will contact you to arrange a permanent fitting. After breast surgery, it is important for patients to keep an eye on their operation wounds and the arm on the affected site. The following not very common can occasionally occur.

## **Wound infection**

Wound infections are unusual, but may develop a few days after surgery. Signs which may indicate a wound infection are:

- Increasing tenderness or warmth at the wound site
- Redness in the area
- Discharge/oozing from the wound
- Flu like symptoms or fever

## **Care Of Your Wound**

It is advisable to keep your wound dry for the first seven days following surgery. Usually the sutures (stitches) used will be dissolvable and it is likely that you will have steri-strips (small strips of surgical tape) on the skin over the wound. If you need to have a dressing over your wound it is essential to keep this dry. When you are able to resume bathing, avoid using perfumed products or rubbing the area too hard.

Approximately two weeks after surgery you will receive an appointment to attend the outpatients department, where you will see a member of the breast care team, who will check your wound and discuss your results with you and also your treatment plan.

## **Pain**

Following breast surgery and in particular lymph node removal, patients can experience pain and discomfort. If you have had your lymph nodes removed you may experience some of the following:

- Tingling pins and needles
- Shooting pains
- Tightness
- Burning sensation
- Shoulder stiffness
- Cording-tightness extending down your arm, which may feel like a tight cord running from your armpit down towards your hand.

All the above are normal and will gradually decrease over a period of time. It is very important to continue with your exercises to prevent stiffness and decreased range of movements.

## **Bruising or Haematoma**

Bruising following breast surgery is common, as the breast has a rich blood supply. It will usually disappear over a few weeks. Occasionally blood can collect in the tissues around the wound causing swelling, firmness and discomfort, this is called a haematoma.

The body will eventually absorb the blood, but this may take a few weeks or you may need to have the fluid drained.

## **Seroma Formation**

Following surgery to the lymph glands and after your drains have been removed, some fluid may collect at the operated site. The body may reabsorb this fluid but sometimes it needs to be

body may reabsorb this fluid but sometimes it needs to be drained using a syringe and needle. If this happens to you, there is no need to be alarmed as this does **not** indicate a problem with your operation but it is advisable to contact the breast care nurse.

Of a swelling occurs over the weekend and is not causing too much discomfort, it is safe to wait until Monday morning to contact the Breast Care Nurse.

## **Useful Numbers**

Breast Care Nurses	01634 825033
Appointments	01634 833891
Mr Ahmed's Secretary	01634 838942
Miss Hassanally's Secretary	01634 833894
Dr Abson's Secretary	01622 225014
Breast Care Unit	01634 825036
Wound Clinic Healthy Living Centre	01634 810925
Wound Clinic Delce Road,	phone 01634 810925 for an
appointment	9.00am to 12.30pm
Opening hours	Monday to Friday 7.15am to 5.45pm
wait until Monday morning	to contact the Breast Care Nurse.

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