

Where to get support and advice

- If you have any questions or are worried about anything to do with your mastectomy please contact the Breast Care Nurses on (0161) 611 3113, or the ward nurses on (0161) 291 5060/2943/2944.
- The nurses are available 24 hours a day for any questions . Alternatively you can contact your GP, NHS drop in centre or speak to your hospital consultant at your next clinic appointment.

Other useful numbers:

Breast Cancer Care

For information or to talk in complete confidence

Also has information for the younger woman with breast cancer

Tel No: 0808 8006000

Or visit <http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk>.

www.lavendertrust.org.uk.

Cancer Bacup

For information, emotional support or practical advice (information also available in different languages)

Tel No: 0808 8001234

Cancerlink

A Macmillan service providing emotional support and information on all aspects of cancer.

Tel No: 0808 808 2020

University Hospital of South Manchester 
NHS Foundation Trust

Going home after a mastectomy

Some advice on how to take care of yourself after breast surgery

Women's Health Suite
Ward C1

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Wound Care.

When cleaning the area around your wound use soap and water . Don't use perfume, scented soap, talc or deodorant as these may irritate the skin, until your wound is fully healed (usually about 3 weeks after surgery). Don't allow the full force of the shower directly onto your wound.

Your wound may be covered with a light dressing, this can be removed if troublesome. Stitches are dissolvable. Paper stitches on top of the wound can be left until they fall off, or may be removed in clinic. You may experience some discomfort to begin with. Rest and taking a mild pain killer should help. If you experience severe discomfort or pain, contact your doctor, ward or breast care nurse for advice.

Three weeks after your surgery, or when your wound is fully healed, it is helpful to rub E45 moisturising cream, wheatgerm or evening primrose cream into your wound to aid healing. All of these can be bought at either the chemist or health food store.

Swelling

You may notice swelling along the suture line, this is usually nothing to worry about. If this happens contact the ward staff, they will give you a time to visit. If the swelling is caused by fluid it can be removed by inserting a very small needle just below your wound. Sometimes patients with this problem find it necessary to visit the ward several times before it settles down.

Clothes

You can wear your usual clothes with a good supportive bra as soon as you feel able to. Underwired bras are not recommended. If the area is swollen, tender or sensitive a maternity sleep bra, crop top, vest or camisole may provide a little support until you are able to wear your usual bra again.

Breast Prostheses

You can be fitted with a temporary "Cumfi" (a soft and comfortable false breast) before you go home. You will receive an appointment for a permanent prosthesis to be fitted 6-8 weeks after your operation. Permanent prostheses are weighted and designed to resemble your natural breast under your clothes.

Sexuality after breast surgery

Breast surgery does not affect your physical ability to have sex, but your emotions may change your sexual feelings for a while. Women need to feel happy with their bodies to have a satisfying sex life. You may be concerned about your partner's reactions and when is the right time for them to see or touch your body. There is no right or wrong time to take this step. When and how depends on your own feelings and relationships. Some women feel very sensitive and need time to be alone to comfort themselves and build their courage to face someone else, even a deeply loved partner. Others need almost instant comfort and find loving touch relieves their fear of being rejected.

Resuming daily activities

You should build up your usual social activities gradually. There is no sport or leisure activity that is permanently ruled out, following your operation. Before continuing strenuous physical activities, you should wait 6 - 8 weeks. If unsure, contact your GP, breast care nurse or the ward staff for advice.

You should only drive when you are able to move your arms fully, can operate the gear stick easily and do an emergency stop. Insurance companies state you are unable to drive within 24 hours following general anaesthetic. If your seat belt irritates the wound you may need to buy a clip available from motoring supermarkets, to keep the belt loose but functional.

You will be unable to return to full work for several weeks as you will feel tired initially. You may need someone who can help you with cooking, cleaning, ironing and heavy shopping for