

 **Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)****Dr Lowe's: Breast Reconstruction Instruction Summary****Pre-operative:**

- 1) Patient should not eat anything after midnight, and hold medicines if instructed
- 2) Avoid aspirin, blood thinners, and arthritis medications prior to surgery
- 3) Ensure that the surgeon is aware of all your medical problems and allergies
- 4) Questions regarding your cancer diagnosis should be directed to your breast surgeon
- 5) The reconstructive options are dependent on your situation
- 6) Your case will be scheduled as soon as possible
- 7) You can ask to obtain prescriptions for medications in advance
- 8) Make sure all your questions have been answered prior to surgery
- 9) Brochures and videos are available for review if requested
- 10) Photographs are required for documentation purposes
- 11) Some patients require blood transfusions and skin flaps sometimes open or fail
- 11) Your surgical pathology may change the treatment plan

Hospital Stay:

- 1) Expect to stay 1-5 days depending on your surgery
- 2) All patients have drains to avoid fluid collections and swelling
- 3) Surgery is usually performed at a hospital (ie Integris Baptist Hospital or Mercy Medical Center)
- 4) Follow activity instructions closely to decrease complications
- 5) You will usually be able to control your on pain medications
- 6) A case worker sometimes evaluates you for home assistance prior to discharge
- 7) Many different doctors will be seeing you to assist with your care
- 8) I will be responsible for your post-reconstructive care and primarily the surgical wound.

Day of Discharge:

- 1) Measure drain output every 24 hours and record
- 2) Limit left arm motion to 45 degrees to the side as much as possible
- 3) Avoid any arm exercises on side of reconstruction unless instructed by surgeon
- 4) You will be taught how to care for your drains and always use Dr. Lowe's drain sheet
- 5) Take medications as instructed and call if they are not tolerated
- 6) Ambulate and sit in chair during normal daytime hours
- 7) Limit activity to around the house for the first week
- 8) Call PSDA, (405) 942-4300 to schedule follow-up appointment within a week

First Several Weeks:

- 1) Follow the surgeons wound instructions first and foremost
- 2) Be prepared for contradictory instructions from different health care providers
- 3) Again, **follow the plastics surgeon's verbal instruction** and call if it is unclear
- 4) Wear bra provided, obtain a sports bra & bring to the first appointment, no under wires
- 5) You may shower at 48 hours or the day after discharge, quickly without dressings
- 6) Limit shower to less than 15 minutes until all drains are removed
- 7) Do not shower for several hours after drain removal
- 7) Call the office if you have any questions or concerns
- 8) Call if flap or wound changes - significant swelling, bleeding, redness, or signs of infection
- 9) Notify Dr. Lowe's nurse of your 24-hour drain output every 3-4 days
- 10) Your surgeon will increase your shoulder activity when wound is stable
- 11) May leave the house for several hours by the second week
- 12) Use good judgment and ask questions if you're not sure.

Thank you for taking the time to review these and other important patient instructions. The information below may assist with other parts of your reconstruction and recovery. I will do my very best to take good care of or your loved one. Warmest Regards, **James B. Lowe, MD**

PREPARING FOR BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

This pamphlet was created to give patients a general idea of what to expect with breast reconstruction surgery and facilitate planning their general recovery period.

Most hospitals offer free items which are helpful during the recovery period. One of these items used at some hospitals is a breast surgery bag that contains a bra, bags to carry post-operative drains, seat belt pillows and a soft prosthesis. You should visit a local cancer center located near you to request your bag prior to surgery.

IF YOU ARE HAVING RECONSTRUCTION WITH A TISSUE EXPANDER EXPECT THE FOLLOWING:

Expected time off from work is generally 4 to 6 weeks depending on your occupation and this should be discussed with your surgeon prior to surgery.

You will be in the hospital for 24-48 hours after surgery. You will usually be discharged with antibiotics, pain medication, and a stool softener. Once home call (405) 942-4300 to schedule or confirm your post-operative follow up in a week to 10 days.

You will be discharged wearing a surgical bra with padding at the surgery site. You are expected to wear a bra all the time even while sleeping except when showering. You will be expected to wear a bra for at least 30 days twenty four hours a day. After the first week you can switch to a soft cup cotton sports type bra that hooks in the front for support. The tissue expander will most likely be filled with a small amount of saline at the time of the operation. It will most likely feel tight.

There will be one or two drains per mastectomy site under the arm to limit fluid collections which normally happen at the operated site. You will be instructed on how to care for the drains prior to discharge from the hospital. These drains need to be emptied and measured twice a day and recorded on a drain record. They also need to be "milked" or "stripped" at least once a day. The hospital staff will show you how to do this prior to discharge. Always bring the drain record with you to all post-op visits. The timing of drain removal will be determined by your total daily drain output.

Typically the tissue expander is filled for the first time at about the fourth post-operative week and every two weeks thereafter until the desired size is reached. In some instances it may need to be filled on a weekly basis. This process can take 2 to 3 months.

ACTIVITY FOLLOWING TISSUE EXPANSION SURGERY:

The first few days at home you should alternate periods of rest with some activity such as walking around the house. Do not overdo it.

Propping yourself on a couple of pillows may be more comfortable for sleeping and sitting around than laying down flat. Do not sleep on the operated side.

Maintain the arm(s) on the operated side(s) at or below shoulder level. Do not raise your hands above the head aggressively, except to comb or wash your hair and brush your teeth.

Do not lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk or 5 lbs for the first 10 days. Do not lift anything over 25 lbs. for 4-6 weeks. Do not vacuum, or do any work which requires heavy repetitive movement.

Do not drive for the first week and not while taking narcotic pain medicine.

The pain medicine can be constipating despite the stool softener prescribed on discharge from the hospital. You should have a bowel movement within 5-7 days of surgery and may need a laxative such as milk of magnesia, dulcolax tablets or a Fleets enema.

The second week you will be feeling better and may be able to go out for a few hours accompanied by someone. Again pace yourself.

You may shower after 48 hours. To avoid pulling out your surgical pin the drains to a pair of pantyhose or string tied to the waist like a belt when showering.

A Reach to Recovery booklet containing exercises for about 30 days after breast surgery can be requested during one of the post op visits. These exercises should not be started or at least limited until 30 days after breast reconstruction surgery.

IF YOU ARE HAVING RECONSTRUCTION WITH A LATISSIMUS FLAP:

Expect to be off from work 6 to 8 weeks depending on your occupation. This should be discussed with your surgeon prior to surgery.

Expect to stay in the hospital 2 to 3 days. Then on discharge call (405)942-4300 to schedule or confirm a follow up appointment for 7 to 10 days after surgery. You will be discharged with antibiotics, pain medication and a stool softener.

There will be drains on the surgery side towards the back as well as under the arm to limit fluid collections. There is always some swelling and 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 twice a day prior to discharge. Bring the drain record with you to all office visits after surgery.

Postoperatively you will be wearing soft bra and will be asked be gentle putting it on for at least 30 days. Later on you will be wearing a soft cotton sports bra for support but NO Under wires until given the OK. This prevents pressure on the flap. Wear comfortable loose clothing.

ACTIVITY AFTER LATISSIMUS OR BACK FLAP:

Once at home, alternate periods of rest with activity. Propping yourself on a couple of pillows is more comfortable than lying flat and prevents some of the swelling. The underarm on the operated side may feel much fuller than the other side. This is normal. Do not sleep on the operated side.

Do not lift the arm on the operated side above your head aggressively, except to wash or comb your hair and brush your teeth. Do not lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk or use that arm to vacuum or do any housework until released by your surgeon to do so which could be 3-4 weeks.

You should have a bowel movement within 5-7 days after surgery and may need to take a laxative such as milk of magnesia, dulcolax tablets or a Fleets enema despite having taken the stool softener.

The second week you may be feeling better and could go out for short trips. Pace yourself. You can increase your activity as the weeks go by.

Do not drive for about 7-10 days and not until you stop taking all narcotic pain medicine.

You may shower after 48 hours. To avoid pulling out your drains secure the drain to a pair of pantyhose or string used like a belt. Pin the drains to it while showering.

Wear a soft bra for support until released by your surgeon to do so. Bra support and compression is required for at least 4 to 6 weeks after surgery. Prevent any overly tight bras and under wire bras from cutting off circulation to the breast flap the first two months.

Do not exercise, use a treadmill or power walk until released by your surgeon. You need about 6 to 8 weeks for the back incision to heal before attempting any of this. You can resume normal exercise activities and lifting at about 3 months after surgery. Do not start any vigorous activity or exercise without discussing it with your surgeon. However, after 30 days request the Reach for Recovery booklet with after breast surgery exercises and start doing them. If there is a tissue expander or implant under the flap this will generally be expanded at 2 week intervals starting at about the fourth week after surgery.

IF YOU ARE HAVING RECONSTRUCTION WITH A TRAM FLAP;

Expect to be off from work about 6 to 8 weeks depending on your occupation and work load. You should discuss this with your surgeon prior to surgery.

Expect to stay in the hospital 4 to 7 days. On discharge call 405-942-4300 to schedule or confirm the first post-op follow-up appointment 7 to 10 days after surgery. You will be discharged with pain medication, antibiotics and a stool softener.

There will be 1-2 drains under the arm of the operated breast side and 2 in the lower tummy below the belly button. These need to be emptied twice a day and their output recorded on the drain record. The hospital staff will teach you how to do this as well as "milk" or strip them daily prior to discharge. Bring the drain record with you to all post-op appointments.

Expect the reconstructed breast to appear fuller than anticipated because of swelling. Expect swelling and bruising of the underarm area, as well as, the tummy. This takes a couple of weeks to get better and several months to totally resolve.

You will be asked to walk around bent over at the waist and should do so for the first several days. After that you can slowly straighten up. Most patients can stand fully upright within a week.

Postoperatively you will BE WEARING A MODIFIED BRA and will be asked not to wear a standard bra for the first 30 days. This prevents putting pressure on the new breast flap. After that a cotton soft cup sports type bra should be worn to provide support. No under wire bras are allowed for several months.

ACTIVITY AFTER TRAM OR ABDOMINAL FLAP:

The first week home from the hospital plan to stay indoors, alternating periods of light activity with rest. Do not do any housework. The second week after your first postoperative visit you can plan short trips out of less than 2 hours.

You may shower after 48 hours. To avoid pulling out your surgical drains wear a pair of pantyhose or a string as a belt and pin your drains to shower.

Do not lift the arm(s) on the operated side above your head aggressively except to wash and comb your hair and brush your teeth. At 30 days after surgery you can request the Reach for Recovery after breast surgery exercise booklet and start them slowly if you want..

Do not lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk or 5 lbs at the most. This restriction applies for 4 weeks.

Do not drive for 3 weeks and/or until you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication.

Do not use a treadmill, power walk or exercise until released to do so by your surgeon. For 3 months you will not be allowed to do sit-ups, weight lift or go to the GYM. After 3 months your exercise activity can be reviewed and started gradually. This is to allow the abdomen to heal.

CALL THE OFFICE IF:

There is redness at the tissue expander/breast flap area.

Undue swelling, pain, drainage or the incision splits open.

You are having a reaction to any medication or your pain is not adequately relieved

You have nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or the inability to have a bowel movement despite having taken the stool softener and or a laxative.

You develop fever of 102 degrees (38.5 C) or more for two days.

Call (405)942-4300 with any questions, problems or concerns Monday through Friday 8:30AM to 4:30PM. Your call will be transferred to the nurse or medical assistant picked by your surgeon. On weekends, after office hours, or on holidays Dr. Lowe or his associate can be reached via the operator at (405) 943-4300.