

Breast surgery

Wide local excision

Introduction

In this booklet you will find information about:

- The routine checks you will have before surgery
- What to take into hospital
- What to expect whilst in hospital
- Discharge advice
- Possible after effects from surgery
- Recovery advice

Pre-operative assessment

You will be asked to attend a pre-operative assessment. This may consist of:

- a chest x-ray,
- blood tests
- blood pressure
- weight
- physical assessment
- A heart tracing (ECG).
- List of current medication
- Assessment by an Anaesthetist

Before surgery

- You will receive a letter confirming the date and admission time for your operation.
- In this letter will be your starving instructions.
- If you are having a sentinel lymph node biopsy, you will also receive an appointment time for the injection from the Nuclear Medicine Department.
- If you are having a wire localisation procedure, you will receive an appointment letter from the Breast Screening unit.

These letters will all be posted separately from the appropriate department. If you have any concerns please contact your Breast Care Nurse.



Patient Information

What to take into hospital

Your operation is likely to be a day case procedure, but we advise you to bring a small overnight bag with you in case you need to stay overnight.

This may include:

- Dressing gown
- Slippers
- Loose fitting pyjamas/button through nightdress
- Non-perfumed soap/shower gel
- Non-wired soft comfortable bra
- Non-perfumed toiletries and towel

Please do not shave under your arm at least 2 days prior to surgery.

On admission

- You will meet a member of the nursing team who will complete your admission paperwork and checks.
- You will be given a hospital gown to wear and fitted with anti-embolic (elasticated support) stockings to reduce the risk of blood clots in your legs.
- You will be seen by your Surgeon and consented for your operation and the operated side marked.
- You will also be seen by the Anaesthetist.

Don't forget to remind the Ward staff if you have an appointment for a nuclear medicine injection and/or a wire localisation procedure.

Your operation will be performed under a general anaesthetic, taking approximately one hour.

The operation will remove the area of abnormality in the breast and some of the surrounding breast tissue. This may affect the size and shape of your breast.

During the operation your surgeon may remove lymph glands from your axilla (armpit). The type of lymph gland removal procedure will have been discussed with you at the time of your diagnosis, by your surgeon.

Leaving hospital

- Following your operation, the Ward staff will assess you according to the Nurse Led discharge Policy and advise when you are fit to go home. You may not see a Doctor after your operation.
- You will need to have had something to eat and drink, have passed urine and feel ready to go home
- You will need to arrange transport home by car/taxi and have an adult with you for at least 24 hours.
- You will be given an appointment letter for your results.
- You will either be given a letter for your Practice Nurse to arrange the removal of your wound dressing OR an appointment to see the Breast Care Nurses.

Patient Information

- Please ensure you have a supply of painkillers at home for example, paracetamol and/or ibuprofen.

Advice after surgery

- Your wound will usually have dissolvable stitches, then covered with sterstrips (white Plasters) and then protected with showerproof dressing.
- The showerproof dressing stays in place for at least 7 days after your operation.
- You will need to keep your dressing dry for 48 hours after surgery. You may then shower but avoid soaking the dressing and use non-perfumed soap/shower gel.
- Some patients may have a wound drain. If so, you will have the drain care explained to you and demonstrated. A drain care booklet will be given to you.
- If you have a wound drain, you may have a District Nurse booked to visit you at home.
- You will usually be advised to start gentle arm exercises the day after your surgery to reduce arm stiffness. An arm exercise booklet will be given to you.
- **DO NOT** apply either heat or ice directly to your wound as it could cause burns or damage to your skin that you may not feel due to change in sensation.

Possible after effects from surgery

Listed below are some of the common after-effects of surgery. Not everyone will have them and they are usually temporary or able to be controlled.

- Pain and discomfort. Take painkillers as advised.
- Bruising and swelling. If this becomes worse then please contact your Breast Care Nurse.
- Seroma: This is a collection of fluid under your wound or arm. If this causes more discomfort then please contact your Breast Care Nurse. Please continue with the basic arm exercises if able.
- Wound infection
- Change in sensation: Initially you may experience numbness, burning, pins and needles, shooting pains and increased level of sensitivity. These symptoms are quite common and may continue for months.
- Cording: This is when you may find a cord-like structure under your arm which may cause pain and restricted movement. This can be improved by good pain relief and performing the arm exercises recommended. If the cording doesn't improve you may be referred to a physiotherapist.
- Lymphoedema: This is a swelling of the arm, hand or chest area, which can occur months or years after surgery to the armpit. If concerned please contact your Breast Care Nurse for advice as Lymphoedema can be treated. You will be given a booklet for advice on reducing the risks.

Recovering from surgery

Recovery after surgery involves healing, both physically and emotionally, and the time this takes varies from person to person.

Patient Information

You may experience tiredness and fatigue, try and do a little more physical activity each day, but rest when you need to.

Eating well will help your body recover and your wound heal.

We advise that you do not lift or carry anything heavy until your wounds have fully healed. This includes housework e.g. hoovering, carrying shopping bags, changing beds etc.

Driving

We advise that you do not drive until you have been assessed in clinic by your Breast Care Nurse. You may want to check with your own insurance company.

Returning to work

We advise that you do not return to work until at least after your results appointment. Your Consultant or Breast Care Nurse will then be able to give you more specific advice.

A sick note can be provided by the hospital from date of surgery until next appointment.

Body image

At first your scar will feel uneven to the touch, and may feel tight and tender. Looking at and feeling the scar for the first time can be difficult. Sometimes it can be helpful to have someone with you the first time that you look at it, while others may want to be by themselves.

If you find this step difficult please let your Breast Care nurse know. She may be able to help you or refer you to the hospital Psychology service.

If after surgery and/or radiotherapy, once your wound is fully healed, if you feel you that the size and shape of your breast has altered, please contact your Breast Care Nurse who can arrange an appointment with a specialist prosthetic fitter for a silicone breast form.

Sexual activity

How breast cancer affects you sexually will be unique to you. All of these worries are normal and to be expected. It may take time for your confidence to return for you to feel comfortable having sex again. You can begin sexual activity whenever you feel ready.

For more information see Breast Cancer Care booklet : Your body, intimacy and sex.

Results appointment

An appointment will be made for you to be seen in the Breast Clinic to discuss the results of your operation and for your wound to be checked.

Patient Information

At this appointment, your pathology results will be discussed with you and you will be informed if any further surgery or treatment is recommended.

You may be referred to a Radiotherapist/Oncologist. This is a doctor who specialises in the treatment and after-care of patients who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

It often helps to have a partner or close family member/friend to accompany you when you attend.

If you require any further information or advice after reading this leaflet, contact the Breast Care Nurses:

Kirsten Regan, Sue Roberts, Bonnie Hunt or Rachael Oates on 024 7696 7089

Gemma Lewis-Smith or Hannah Colledge on 024 7696 7157

UHCW NHS Trust, Breast Screening Unit, Coventry

Other local sources of support and information:

Macmillan Information Specialist

Free support and information is available from our cancer information specialist, who is based in the Macmillan Information Centre.

Main Entrance

University Hospital

Clifford Bridge Road

Coventry

CV2 2DX

Telephone: 024 7696 6052

Web: www.macmillan.org.uk

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7200 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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