

## Breast surgery

### Wide local excision

In this booklet you'll find information about:

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

### Pre-operative assessment

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

- blood pressure
- weight
- physical assessment
- a heart tracing (ECG).
- list of current medication
- assessment by an anaesthetist



## Patient Information

### **Before surgery**

You'll receive a letter confirming the date and admission time for your operation. In this letter will be your starving instructions.

If you're having a sentinel lymph node biopsy, you'll also receive an appointment time for the injection from the Nuclear Medicine Department.

### **Wire localisation**

If you're having a wire localisation or Magseed insertion procedure, you'll receive an appointment letter from the Breast Screening unit.

The wire localisation procedure is performed in the Breast Screening Unit on the day of your operation. The procedure is performed under local anaesthetic.

The procedure involves inserting a fine wire into the area of breast tissue to be removed. A ultrasound scan or mammogram is used as a guide. Once the wire is in place, a dressing is applied. You'll then have your operation later that day, where the affected tissue and wire are removed by the surgeon.

If you're having a Magseed insertion, this is usually be performed before the date of your operation in the Breast Screening Unit. This is performed under local anaesthetic.

**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'll meet a member of the nursing team who will complete your admission paperwork and checks.
- You'll 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'll be seen by your surgeon, consented for your operation and the side to be operated on will be marked.
- You'll also be seen by the anaesthetist.

**Remind the ward staff if you have an appointment for a nuclear medicine injection and/or a wire localisation procedure.**

## Patient Information

Your operation will be performed under a general anaesthetic. It'll take approximately 1 to 2 hours.

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 armpit (axilla). Your surgeon will have discussed the type of lymph gland removal procedure with you at the time of your diagnosis.

## Leaving hospital

- After your operation, the ward staff will assess you according to the nurse led discharge policy and advise when you're fit to go home. You may not see a doctor after your operation.
- You'll need to have something to eat and drink, have passed urine and feel ready to go home before you're discharged.
- You'll need to arrange transport home by car/taxi and have an adult with you for at least 24 hours.
- Please make sure you have a supply of painkillers at home, for example paracetamol and/or ibuprofen.

## Advice after surgery

- Your wound will usually have dissolvable stitches (which do not need to be removed), surgical glue, and be covered with Steri-Strips (White plasters)
- The Steri-Strips will stay in place for at least 2 weeks after your operation and should be allowed to fall off themselves.
- You'll need to keep your wound dry for 48 hours after surgery. After 48 hours you may shower but avoid soaking the wound. Use a non-perfumed soap/shower gel.

## Patient Information

- Some patients may have a wound drain. If so, you'll 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'll be given a Breast Care Nurse Clinic appointment for 1 week after surgery.
- You'll 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. 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 can be controlled.

- Pain and discomfort - Take painkillers as advised.
- Bruising and swelling - If this becomes worse, please contact your Breast Care Nurse.
- Seroma - This is a collection of fluid under your wound or arm. If this causes more discomfort, please contact your Breast Care Nurse. Please continue with the basic arm exercises if able.
- Wound infection
- Change in sensation – 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.

## Patient Information

- Lymphoedema - This is a swelling of the arm, hand, or chest area. It can occur months or years after surgery to the armpit. If you're concerned, please contact your Breast Care Nurse for advice as Lymphoedema can be treated. You'll be given a booklet for advice on reducing the risks.

## Recovering from surgery

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

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

Eating well will help your wound heal and body recover.

We advise 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.

## 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 - 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.

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. They 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 and 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.

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

You may be referred to a Radiotherapist/Oncologist. This is a doctor that 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:**

Telephone number: 01788 663 412

Email: [breastcarenurse@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:breastcarenurse@uhcw.nhs.uk)

### **Other local sources of support and information:**

#### **Macmillan Information Specialist**

Free support and information is available from our cancer information specialist. They're based in the Macmillan Information Centre.

Main Entrance, University Hospital, Clifford Bridge Road,  
Coventry, CV2 2DX

**Phone: 024 7696 6052**

**Web: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)**



## Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 024 7696 7089 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

### Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.



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#### Document History

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