

Frequently Asked Questions After Breast Surgery

What are some typical signs & symptoms to be aware of after breast surgery?

- Tightness in the chest region and stiffness; tingling, burning or intermittent shooting pain. These are normal experiences as the skin, muscles and tissue stretch to accommodate implants, and as sensory nerves heal. Pain medication and muscle relaxants will help you cope with any discomfort. Consistent sharp pain should be reported to our office.
- Hypersensitivity of nipples or lack of sensitivity: This is normal and will gradually resolve over time. You may also experience a small amount of fluid or milk seeping through the nipples. If this becomes painful or excessive notify our office.
- A feeling of heaviness: It is normal for your chest to feel heavy as you adjust to your implants. This will subside within 2-4 weeks following surgery.
- Shiny skin or an itchy feeling: Swelling can cause the breasts skin to appear shiny. As the healing process advances, you may also find a mild to severe itchy feeling of the breasts. An antihistamine like Benadryl can help to alleviate severe, constant itchiness. If the skin becomes red and hot to the touch, contact our office.
- Asymmetry, the breasts look different, or heal differently: Breasts may look or feel quite different from one another in the days and weeks following surgery. This is normal. Although no two breasts in nature or following surgery are perfectly symmetrical, time will help produce breasts that are similar in shape, position and size.
- A sloshing sound or sensation: This is completely normal. There can be air, antibiotic solution, fluid, or a combination of all three trapped in the breast pocket after surgery. This will not harm you in any way. It just takes some time for your body to get rid of these, usually about 1-2 weeks on average.

When should I call the office?

- A high fever (over 101.5°), severe nausea and vomiting, continued dizziness or incoherent behavior, such as hallucinations
- Any pain that cannot be controlled by your pain medication
- Bright red skin that is hot to the touch
- If one breast quickly becomes larger than the other or bruising that is localized to one breast or region of the chest
- Shortness of breath, difficulties breathing, rapid heartbeat
- Leg or calf swelling, pain, or tenderness that is asymmetrical
- Severe anxiety or depression

When can I take my next dose of pain medication, muscle relaxant, or anti-nausea medicine?

- Refer to your discharge instructions to see when the last dose was given. Narcotic pain medication can be taken every 4-6 hours, Tylenol every 4-6 hours, Gabapentin nightly, muscle relaxants every 8 hours, and anti-nausea every 8 hours.

What should I eat?

- Eat soft, bland, nutritious food for the first 24 hours then advance as tolerated. Fluids are important following surgery. Stick to non-carbonated, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free beverages including fruit juices and water, milk and yogurt drinks. You should drink at least 8 ounces of fluid every 2-3 hours.

Why is my mouth dry?

- It is normal after general anesthesia to experience dry mouth. It can also be worsened using Gabapentin (nerve pain reliever). If dry mouth persists, you can use over the counter Biotene. Make sure to continue drinking plenty of fluids.

Why can't I go to the bathroom?

- It is normal after general anesthesia to have difficulty urinating. Make sure you're drinking plenty of fluids. Try running water as background noise, or even placing your hand in water. If you have not urinated within 8 hours after surgery and have discomfort or inability to urinate despite feeling the urge, contact our office.
- It is also normal to experience sluggish bowels after general anesthesia combined with the use of narcotic pain relievers. Try to limit your post-operative narcotic use if tolerable. You should also be taking a stool softener (ie Colace) twice daily. If you are prone to constipation, you can begin taking a laxative immediately after surgery (ie Dulcolax, Miralax, Smooth Move Tea). If you have not had a bowel movement by 72 hours after surgery, try drinking Magnesium Citrate; drink half the bottle, wait 6 hours, then drink the other half if you still have not had a bowel movement. If you still have not had a bowel movement within 12 hours, you may drink a 2nd bottle of Magnesium Citrate and subsequently an over the counter enema if 2nd bottle hasn't worked within 12 hours.

Why am I so sleepy?

- It is normal after general anesthesia to feel groggy, confused, chilly, nauseated, scared, alarmed, or emotional. It can take 48 hours for the effects of general anesthesia to subside. Your body is also using a lot of energy to heal and you may tire easily.

When can I shower after surgery?

- 24 hours. At that time, you will remove any bulky dressings (gauze and white tape) and/or Tegaderm dressings (thin, Saran wrap in appearance), leave the steri-strips (white tape that will be underneath dressings) on, and get in the shower. You can shower as you normally would and do not need to continue using antibacterial/surgical soap as it can be irritating to the skin. You can raise your arms to about shoulder level. Soap can run over the steri-strips. Pat the steri-strips dry after the shower and then put bra/garment back on.

How long should I keep wearing the surgical bra after surgery?

- Most people feel comfortable wearing the bra day and night for the first 6 weeks. Unless specifically stated otherwise, you can wear cami tanks with the built-in shelf bras if those are more comfortable. Unless stated otherwise, no sports bras or underwire bras.

Will I get another surgical bra?

- You may purchase more at your first post op visit or online (www.shopcoobie.com)

When can I wear a normal bra?

- After 6 weeks post op for most patients. Still no underwire or push-up/demi cup bras unless there is a special occasion.

IN THE EVENT OF AN AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCY, CALL THE SURGEON'S OFFICE NUMBER AND/OR AFTER-HOURS NUMBER AND FOLLOW THE PROMPTS TO BE PUT IN CONTACT WITH THE NURSE OR DOCTOR ON CALL.