

# Breast Reduction Surgery

## *Post operative instructions*

### **Before your operation**

- Organise for a responsible adult to accompany you home after your operation and stay with you for the full 24 hours after your surgery.
- Plan to have approximately one week off work, however many patients are able to return to work a few days after their procedure
- Pack and bring to the hospital:
  - A loose fitting, button up shirt to get dressed into when going home, so you don't have to lift your arms above your head.
  - Your post op bra.

### **What to expect immediately after surgery**

You will wake up following your operation with your post operative bra already on. Please wear this for 2 weeks, day and night.

Everyone recovers from their anaesthetic differently; but post operative nausea is a common side effect following general anaesthesia. If you are experiencing nausea we recommend eating lightly with small meals throughout the day. If nausea or vomiting is severe, please contact us.

You can expect slight bleeding, pain and discomfort for a few days with mild swelling and bruising for up to 2 weeks.

### **What to expect the first week post surgery**

**Pain relief:** The majority of patients will experience mild pain following surgery and it is also normal to feel some tightness. Sometimes it may be that the pain is limited to mainly one side, this should not alarm you as healing can proceed differently in each side. Pain should be manageable and will slowly ease over the course of your recovery. Your anaesthetist may provide you with pain medication, to be taken as directed.

If you have not been given a prescription, we recommend the use of Panadol or Panadol extra to manage any discomfort.

Do not take aspirin for at least 10 days following surgery as this can increase the risk of bleeding. If your pain is severe and does not subside with pain medication, please contact us.

**Positioning:** For the first week following your procedure, it will be necessary to sleep on your back. Elevation of the upper half of your body with 2 or 3 pillows will help reduce swelling and is generally a more comfortable position following your procedure.

**Driving:** You are not to drive or operate machinery for 24 hours post surgery. You can drive when you can turn and look over your shoulder comfortably, which is usually after about one week.

**Dressings:** If you have a waterproof dressing you can shower during this first week. Otherwise, please keep the dressing dry and in place until your first post operative appointment. Your incisions will seep some fluid and blood for a short time following surgery, when you can keep clean by sponging or bathing.

**Swelling:** Your breasts will have a degree of swelling and bruising following the procedure, and it is normal for one side to be more swollen than the other side. This should subside within 3-4 weeks, however if a significant difference in size is noticed please contact us.

**Sensation:** Nipple and breast sensation is normal in some women immediately after the breast reduction procedure. Others may experience numbness, hypersensitivity or tingling as the nerves regenerate. For most women, sensation levels return to normal over time. If your nipples become overly sensitive, place a Band-Aid across them.

**Exercise:** Walking and other forms of light exercise are an important way of promoting healing and will help to reduce swelling and chance of blood clots forming. You can move your arms, neck and torso in all directions- it won't tear anything as long as the movements are within a comfortable range for you. Be gentle lifting your arms above your head within the first two weeks; often, quick movements of the arm can result in sharp, stabbing or pulling pain.

Avoid the following:

- Bending
- Lifting anything over 1kg
- Pulling or straining for at least 6 weeks.

**Constipation:** Constipation is common following a general anaesthetic. To avoid constipation, ensure you drink plenty of fluids and foods containing fibre. If necessary, we recommend a gentle, laxative drink such as Movicol. This can be purchased from your chemist.

**Removal of sutures:** We will normally remove sutures at your first post operative review. If absorbable sutures have been used, removal will not be necessary.

### **Recovery after the first week**

**Scar Management:** Breast reduction scars will generally be slightly red for a few months and then begin to fade. On your second post operative visit you will be advised on the most effective scar management options to ensure you have the best possible outcome.

**Exercise:** After approximately 3 weeks you may be able to resume light exercise, strenuous lifting (e.g. children) and household duties such as cleaning. Vigorous exercise can usually be resumed after 6 weeks. It is important to listen to your body, if an activity is causing you discomfort, it is too soon following your procedure!

**Smoking:** We recommend you do not smoke for at least 3-4 weeks following your operation as smoking impedes blood flow to the skin and increases healing time.

**Alcohol:** Alcohol can increase post-operative bleeding and can be dangerous in combination with your pain medication. Do not drink alcohol until you have finished taking all pain medication.

### **Contact us if you develop:**

- A fever or become unwell
- Nausea and vomiting which persists after 48 hours
- Spreading redness/rash over the operative area or suture lines
- Fluid build up in your breasts or sudden swelling in the area
- Pain which is not relieved or controlled by your pain-killers
- Have sudden copious discharge of fluid or oozing from your wounds
- For after hours emergencies or if you are unable to contact the office, visit your local GP or emergency room.