Post-surgery information

For patients undergoing wide local excision and axillary lymph node dissection
Care of your wound

Before you are discharged home your wound will be checked by your ward nurse or your Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist.

- Prior to your discharge, the ward nurse will check that the dressing or glue which may have been applied instead of a dressing is clean, intact and dry. Please keep your wound/dressing as dry as possible.

- You may wash the area with a mild soap and then rinse and pat it dry when your dressing is removed or 24 hours after your surgery if your wound has been glued.

- Your Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist will advise you when you can use a deodorant/antiperspirant.

- Apply a moisturiser or aqueous cream to your wound when advised.

- If your wound becomes red, swollen or is leaking please contact your breast clinical nurse specialist on 01225 824057. Out of normal working hours please call Phillip Yeoman ward (B41) 01225 825477 for advice.

Fluid collection

Once your drain/s has been removed there is a possibility that you may get a collection of fluid (seroma) in your armpit or around your wound. If your wound feels spongy or full or you are unable to put your arm down properly please call your Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist on 01225 824057 who will arrange to see you.

This fluid is common and perfectly normal and it will be fine to wait until the Monday morning should you discover it over the weekend. It will not cause any harm or damage.

If you do have fluid present, your Breast Care Nurse will drain it. This takes minutes and it does not hurt.
Care of your arm, hand and prevention of lymphoedema

It is important to follow this advice after your operation. This advice should be always be followed, not just the first few weeks after surgery.

Try to avoid:

- Carrying any heavy weights such as heavy shopping, suitcases or a full bucket of water with the affected arm. This is the single most common cause of arm swelling.
- Having injections, blood, blood pressure taken or an infusion in the affected arm. This does not apply in an emergency situation.

Ensure you:

- Elevate your arm on a pillow in the evenings especially if your arm feels uncomfortable.
- Wear gloves when gardening.
- Take care when clipping your nails or using anything sharp near your hands.
- Use an electric razor or depilatory cream when removing underarm hair.

If you have a cut, graze or an insect bite on the affected side, clean it well, apply an antiseptic cream and cover with a plaster. Observe the area and if it shows signs of infection i.e. redness, swelling, or pain then please see your GP that day to obtain a two week course of antibiotics. After axillary lymph node surgery, swelling known as lymphoedema can occur in the arm or breast. This is due to the disruption in lymph drainage. If you think you may have developed lymphoedema then please call your Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist.
Exercises

It’s important that you continue the stretching exercises as advised until two weeks after your surgery when we would like you to start more advanced arm exercises. These exercises are using different muscle groups. The Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist will give you a separate booklet illustrating these exercises and will also demonstrate them. You can also access this exercise booklet online via www.breastcancercare.org.uk under the publications section.

We advise you to perform these exercises for at least six weeks but you can continue lifelong if you wish.

Ensure you take pain relief until your arm is no longer painful to move.

Other advice

Only do what you feel you have the energy to do. You should avoid driving until you can comfortably do an emergency stop at least two weeks after surgery.

Gradually introduce tasks like vacuuming, ironing and hanging out the washing.

Use your arm normally.

Follow up appointment at the Breast Clinic

You will be sent an outpatient appointment following your operation which is usually scheduled approximately 10-13 days after surgery. You will see the surgeon and Breast CNS at this appointment where the results of your operation and the findings under the microscope (pathology) will be explained to you. We will also check your wound.
Useful organisations

Breast Cancer Care
5-13 Great Suffolk Street,
London, SE10NS
Helpline - 0808 800 6000
(Freephone)
Switchboard - 02079603400
Email: info@breastcancercare.org.uk
Website: www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Penny Brohn Cancer Care
Chapel Pill Lane, Pill,
Bristol,
BS20 0HH
Telephone: 01275 370 100
Email: info@pennybrohn.org

Macmillan
Macmillan Cancer Support
89 Albert Embankment,
London, SE1 7UQ
Free Helpline: 0808 808 0000
Head Office 020 7840 7840
Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

We Hear You
Free professional counselling for
anyone affected by cancer or
another life threatening illness. For
adults, teenagers and children.
2A Market place, Frome, BA11 1AG
Telephone 01373 455255
Email: info@wehearyou.org.uk
Website: www.wehearyou.org.uk/

Local support groups

Breast of Friends, RUH Bath This group meets on the first Monday of the month in the seminar room, RUH Pain clinic (A17), from 12.30-2pm. Tea and a chat, plus occasional speakers on a variety of subjects. No need to book. For further information contact Clinical Nurse Specialists on 01225 824057

At Your Service This support group meets for about two hours, on the first Wednesday of the month at 10.30am in the Slug & Lettuce Bar, George Street, Bath. The sessions cost £2 per person. You can book by calling Nina on 01249 464111 or mobile 07745887150.

Somerset Cancer Care: Mendip Support Group This group meets at The Sherston Inn, Priory Road, Wells on Fridays from 10am-midday. No booking or referral required. Contact St Margaret’s Hospice on 0845 070 8910 or Katie on 01823 346959.

Young Women 4 Young Women Breast Cancer Group This breast cancer support group based at Southmead Hospital, Bristol. They meet the first Wednesday of the month 7-9pm. Telephone 07546512637, email yw4yw@hotmail.com or visit www.youngwomen4youngwomen.com.
Breast Care Swimming Group This group meets at 6.50 -8pm on Mondays at Kingswood School, Lansdown, Bath. Contact Jan 01249 716298 or Sue 01225 312312. Each session costs £2.50. Please note that this group does not meet on bank holidays.

You might like to write some notes

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Contact Details

Breast Unit reception desk 01225 825881

Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists office 01225 824057 (answerphone) Available 9am - 5pm

Phillip Yeoman ward B41 01225 825476

Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists

Cherry Miller
Kate Hope
Debbie Cole
Rachael Bolitho
Irene Buckley

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Telephone 01225 825656 or Email ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net