

Day case breast surgery: discharge advice

You have been booked to have your operation as a day case.

Please arrange for a family member or friend to collect you from the hospital on the evening of your operation and to stay with you for the first 24 hours after your surgery.

Contact details of the ward you can be collected from will be provided on the day of your operation.

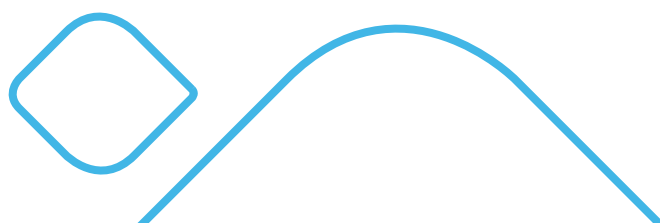
This booklet has been produced to help you get back to full health as quickly as possible after your breast operation. Research has shown that you are more likely to have the best outcome, the earlier you are out of bed, eating and drinking and performing your arm exercises. This will speed your recovery and make complications following surgery less likely to develop.

1. Breast prosthesis and bra advice

If you are having a **mastectomy**, you have been given a soft prosthesis to wear in your own comfortable, non -wired bra. You may start to wear this as soon as you wish after the operation.

We can fit the permanent (silicone) prosthetic after about 6 weeks. You can contact your Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist (B.CNS) for an appointment with the prosthetic fitter, who will measure you and fit you with a mastectomy bra and prosthesis. She can also advise about other suitable bras, clothing and swimwear that is available from catalogues or high street providers.

If you are having a **wide local excision of your breast**, we advise you to wear a supportive, non-wired bra day and night for the first 2 weeks to reduce bruising and swelling.



2.Drains (if used)

Drains are sometimes placed after surgery to remove excess fluid from the wound area.

We have given you written and verbal advice about **going home with the wound drain** and a material bag to carry the drain around in at home.

The drain stays in place for between 2 and 7 days after your surgery and your B.CNS will ring you each day Monday to Friday to assess how much is in the drain and arrange to see you in the Breast Unit (B3) to remove it.

Occasionally there can be problems with the drainage and we would ask you to **contact us if you notice:**

- Leaking of fluid around the drain site.
- Burning sensation and/or the drain site becoming red and warm to touch, which may indicate infection.
- No drainage at all, which may indicate the drain is blocked.

3. Dressings/stitches and wound care

Your wound will either be covered with a splash proof dressing or a layer of surgical skin glue.

The stitches under the skin are dissolvable. You may notice some threads of stitch at each end of the wound which will be trimmed at your appointment with the surgeon after 10-14 days (this appointment will be posted to you).


The dressing should be kept as dry as possible and not removed. We advise you not to shower for the first couple of days whilst the skin begins to heal. After this, you are able to shower with care from the waist down or take a shallow bath.

It is not uncommon that a small amount of discharge from the operation site is seen on the dressing. However, if you feel the discharge is heavy, smells, is bright red or causing irritation you should contact your B. CNS for further advice(**01225 824057**)

If you have skin glue as a dressing, please leave in place as it will flake off slowly in the following weeks. You may shower after 24 hours and gently pat the wound dry with a clean towel.

4. What to expect after surgery-- the following are all **possible** after effects.

General anaesthetic-- you may feel tired and have low energy after your operation and this is normal. Some people can feel dizzy or sickly. These feelings should improve in the first few days.



You may have a sore throat or discomfort when you swallow which is due to the tube placed in your airway to help you breathe during the operation. This should get better after a few days.

Pain and discomfort---you are likely to have some pain and discomfort after the operation, particularly in the armpit. Everybody's experience is different. Taking regular pain relief, such as **paracetamol four times a day**, is advised for the first few weeks.

You can add in **ibuprofen**(if you are able to take it) 36 hours after your operation. Always take this tablet with food or a milky drink.

After this, please take as and when required. **Please buy a supply of paracetamol and ibuprofen(if able to take) before your operation to have at home.** If you need stronger painkillers, such as dihydrocodeine, we will provide them before you are discharged or your GP can do so after you are discharged. Please be aware that dihydrocodeine can cause constipation, nausea and dizziness.

Some people find changing position and using pillows to support the wound can help reduce pain or discomfort.

Bruising and swelling--bruising and swelling are common after surgery and are part of the healing process. It may affect your breast, chest wall, shoulder and/or arm and should lessen after 6-8 weeks. If swelling persists please contact your B.CNS.

Seroma--following the removal of your drain, many people experience fullness at the site of the operation or swelling under the arm. This is due to a collection of fluid called a seroma. The fluid is not a cause for concern and it is usually reabsorbed by the body over time.

However, if the seroma is large, causes discomfort, restricts arm movement or does not go away, please call your B.CNS who can draw the fluid off using a needle and syringe. If fluid builds up over the weekend do not be worried, but please call your B.CNS on Monday morning to arrange a visit to see her for drainage. A seroma can form again and may need to be drained several times over a period of weeks before it stops building up again.

Haematoma-- this is a rare complication of surgery, where blood can collect in the tissue at the site of your operation causing swelling, bruising, discomfort, hardness and possibly bright red blood in the drain tube. If it is confirmed that you have a haematoma, you will usually return to the operating theatre to stop the bleeding and

remove the blood clot. The most common time that a haematoma can occur is **in the first 48 hours after your operation.**

Please contact the hospital via the

EMERGENCY GENERAL SURGERY OUT OF HOURS SERVICE ON

07909532251

if you think you have a haematoma and do not eat or drink until advised to do so by the medical team.

Wound infection--please contact your B.CNS if you have any concerns about your wound and particularly if you have any of the following symptoms

- redness in the area
- the wound has become more tender after surgery, swollen or warm to touch
- discharge from the wound
- feeling unwell with a raised temperature

Change in sensation--following breast surgery you may notice:


- loss of (or reduced)sensation or feeling
- numbness or coldness
- weakness in the arm
- sensitivity to touch or pressure
- pins and needles, burning sensations, tingling or shooting pains
- breast “phantom pain” if you have had a mastectomy.

Stiffened shoulder -- your arm and shoulder on the operated side may feel stiff and sore for several weeks. Your B.CNS will have given you a leaflet(**Exercises after breast cancer surgery**) with some gentle exercises to help you return to the range of movement you had before surgery. It is important to start these from the day after your operation. You may wish to practise the exercises at home before your surgery.

Returning home after breast surgery--although you may feel well after you are discharged home, you may find even simple tasks leave you feeling exhausted. It is common to feel tired for some time following surgery. It is tempting to try and resume your usual activities at once, you but this can add to your general fatigue and delay your recovery.

Things you should do

- get out of bed and dressed every day. This will encourage your normal sleep pattern to return and help you build strength

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- **accept offers of help such as shopping, household tasks, gardening, driving you to appointments and childcare from family and friends for several weeks**
 - take gentle exercise, such as walking, to improve mobility and strength. Gradually increase the distance as you start to feel stronger.
 - eat and drink as normal
 - take painkillers if you have pain or discomfort. This will help you to feel better more quickly and allow you to do your arm exercises.
 - Your B.CNS will have given you written and verbal information about the prevention of lymphoedema (swelling to arm, hand, breast/chest wall). Please do read the information sheet and contact us with any questions.

Some people feel low in mood after surgery. Many different emotions arise which can cause confusion and mood swings. There is no right or wrong way to feel. If you are feeling low and would like to speak about your feelings please call your **Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist on 01225 824057(Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm)**.

You can resume sexual activity as soon as you feel able, however give yourself time and do not expect too much.

Appointments

Please be aware that you may have up to 2-3 appointments in the Breast Unit (B3) in the first 2 weeks after your operation and you will need to organise for a family member or friend to transport you as we advise you not to drive at this time. Unfortunately, the hospital and your GP are unable to organise transport for these appointments unless there is a **medical need**.

Things you should not do

- do not lift any heavy items for at least 6-8 weeks after surgery as this can put pressure on the healing wound.
- do not drive until you feel that you will be in full control of the vehicle. This includes being able to comfortably wear a seatbelt and being confident that you can perform an emergency stop. Some medication may affect your response time so please do not drive if this happens. An average time not to drive following breast surgery is 3 weeks.
- avoid heavy household chores such as vacuuming for at least 6 weeks.
- do not resume sporting activities, gym work, advanced yoga/ pilates, running or Zumba for at least 6 weeks or when advised by your B.CNS.

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- do not return to work until you have seen your consultant for your post operative results. This is particularly important if your job involves physical activity rather than sitting down. Please ask your consultant for a sick note for work if needed. Any further sick notes can be given by your GP.

6.Support after discharge

It is important that we know how you are feeling when you go home from hospital. Please do not hesitate to contact your **Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist** with problems/concerns or questions, **Monday to Friday (8.30AM-5.30PM) on 01225 824057**. If no one is available to take your call, please leave a message on the answerphone and we will call you back.

If you have been discharged over the weekend and have concerns please contact the **EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS SERVICE ON 07909532251**.

7.Other help available

Following your diagnosis you are entitled to free prescriptions for 5 years. Your B.CNS will give you an application form for you to complete and then give to your GP or local pharmacist to send away for you.

If you have any financial concerns during your treatment and recovery, please speak to your B.CNS who can provide you with information or refer you to people who can help with this.

Useful contact numbers

Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm) 01225 824057

Out of office hours –Emergency out of hours service at RUH 07909532251

Day Surgery Unit (B42) 01225 824411

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG

01225 428331 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

