

DIRECTIONS TO FOLLOW AFTER SURGERY

for patients of
Dr. William H. Goodson III, MD

These directions are for a breast biopsy, a “partial mastectomy” or lumpectomy, or a mastectomy without reconstruction. If you have reconstruction, your plastic surgeon will be in charge for the first ten days after surgery.

I take my own calls unless I have specifically told you otherwise. If you are worried or if you have questions after surgery, please call my office at 415.923.3925. At night, the answering service is the same telephone number.

Do not drive for two days after a breast biopsy. For other breast surgery, discuss with Dr. Goodson when is it safe to drive. This is usually 7 to 14 days.

These directions are in addition to the forms that will be given you by the hospital or the surgery center. There are two very significant differences that contradict what is written on the form provided by the hospital:

1. **DO NOT USE AN ICE PACK ON YOUR BREAST.** Research has shown that if you cool tissue, you will increase the risk of infection.
2. **DO NOT REMOVE YOUR DRESSING.** There is a plastic dressing over your incision that should be left in place until you are seen in my office. If you look at the plastic, you will see white gauze. Sometimes a few drops of blood will show on the gauze. This is not a problem as long as you can also still see some white gauze. If there is enough blood that there is no white area of gauze, I should see you. Please call my office.

In addition:

Plan to have someone else drive you home.

Bring with you a bra that you can wear for 72 hours after surgery. The purpose of the bra is to hold your breast still and prevent motion. It does not need to be tight.

This bra should be comfortable. It will do more for pain control than pain pills.

Avoid big activities for the first 72 hours after surgery. For example, do not go to the gym, do not plan to clean or move household items, or do not plan similar activities.

Drink a lot of liquids in the first two weeks after surgery. Some of this may be water, but you will probably feel better if part is either clear fruit juices or bottled beverages such as ginger ale or cola with real sugar, not diet drinks (Yes, you read that right, but that is the only time I recommend sugar drinks).

Eat at least 50 to 60 grams of protein per day after your surgery. Your body needs protein to repair your tissue. If you do not eat protein, your body will take the protein it needs from your muscles and you will feel weak.

If you wish to take vitamins, take Vitamin C 2,000 to 4,000 milligrams per day, Vitamin A 10,000 to 20,000 international units per day, and zinc between 10 and 20 mg per day. The lower number in each range is sufficient, and the higher number is a level that is safe in case you cannot find a pill in the smaller size. **DO NOT TAKE VITAMIN E SUPPLEMENTS.** (In general, vitamin E supplements in excess of 200 i.u. per day are never good for you.)

DO NOT STAY IN BED.

GET OUT OF BED AND WALK!

Walking, even short distances, is the best prevention for blood clots.

If you stay in bed, your muscles will get weak from disuse.

If you stay in bed, you will take longer to recover from surgery. It is more beneficial to walk for ten minutes, even if you get tired and need to go back to bed, than to sit in a chair for two hours.

For your first walks, you may wish to walk inside. If you do go outside, don't go far from your house. Go short distances until you know how you will tolerate walking.

If you had surgery on your nodes, do not do extensive activities with your arm such as using a vacuum, washing your hair, etc. until you have discussed it with me. As a rule of thumb, there is no need to start arm motion exercises right after surgery, and the exercises can delay healing.

Keep the area of your surgery absolutely dry for 72 hours after surgery.

If you have drain tubes, keep that part of your body dry until the tubes have been removed. This means to wash your hair at a sink. You may sit in a bathtub, but only with water up to your waist.

If you do not have drain tubes, after 72 hours you may shower. Do not run water on your bandage, and do not put soap anywhere near your breast or your axilla (your arm pit). I will see you in my office and tell you when it is okay to shower.

If you have had surgery in your axilla (arm pit) or have a mastectomy, do not use deodorant until told is it okay by Dr. Goodson.