



Breast Surgery Patient Information Booklet

Date of Surgery _____

***Please bring this booklet on the day of your surgery.**

QHC#37

What is a Mastectomy?

A Mastectomy is the surgical removal of the breast. The precise type of operation performed is determined after careful assessment and discussion between you and your doctor.

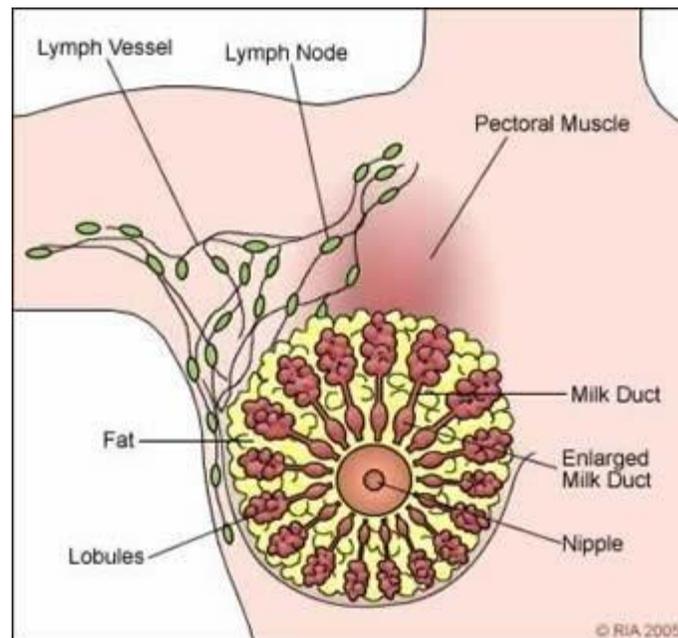
There are three types:

Simple Mastectomy – removal of the entire breast.

Partial or Segmental Mastectomy – removal of a portion of the breast tissue along with the tumor.

Modified Radical Mastectomy – removal of the entire breast and all of the lymph nodes in the underarm region.

If axillary nodes (lymph nodes) are removed, your doctor can obtain important information on whether the nodes contain cancer cells or not. This will help to determine the right treatment for you after your surgery.



Day of Surgery

Arrive at the hospital to be registered at your scheduled time. After admission and preparation for surgery by the nursing staff, you will go to the Operating Room. The Anaesthetist will administer an anaesthetic. The most common type of anaesthesia for mastectomy surgery is general anaesthesia (puts you to sleep). The length of surgery is approximately one hour.

After Surgery

You will remain in the Recovery room for 1-2 hours while recovery from anaesthesia is monitored. You will be taken to your hospital room or to Day Surgery. Patients often return from surgery with a variety of tubes. Intravenous is given for fluids and medications. A drainage tube may also be present in the operated area

Pain

Your doctor will prescribe pain medication either by injection or tablet. It is normal to have discomfort/pain after your surgery. It is very important to keep the pain under control. Please let your nurse know if you are uncomfortable.

You may experience some numbness and tingling sensations in your upper arm. This is normal and should decrease in time.

Nutrition

After surgery, you may have nausea and/or vomiting. Anti-nausea medication may be given to control this. You will be able to increase your diet as your condition permits, starting with ice chips and clear fluids to a diet as tolerated.

Activity

Deep breathing and coughing is very important to help prevent lung congestion or pneumonia. It is helpful to support your incision with your hand or a pillow when coughing.

Wound

After surgery, the wound is covered with a sterile dressing. It is important to keep it clean and dry until it is well healed. You may have a drainage tube in the affected area. The tube is made of soft plastic and attached to a suction bulb coming out of the skin, near the incision. The drain is placed during surgery and removes fluid that accumulates under the incision site after surgery. You will be instructed on its care before going home from the hospital.

The drain should be pinned to your shirt or bra, **NEVER** pin the drain to your pants. The drain is removed once the amount of fluid is decreased. A Home Care (CCAC) Case Manager may visit you in the hospital to arrange nursing visits at home. The staples or sutures are usually removed in 10-14 days.

Most patients go home the same day as the surgery. Have someone available to stay with you for a few days to help you as needed.

Guidelines for Home

You may resume your normal diet. Try to eat as well-balanced diet. Good nutrition promotes healing and helps to fight infection. Choose iron-rich foods, such as red meat, green vegetables, whole grain breads and cereal. The vitamin C in juice or citrus fruits helps the iron to be absorbed.

High fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables and bran will help prevent constipation.

Take pain medication as needed and any other prescribed medications as directed. Pain and tenderness can be expected for the first few days after surgery. The pain should lessen, not increase. Call your surgeon if your pain is not relieved with the prescribed medication.

You may wash your hair and may have a shower if your incision is not draining or separated. Your visiting nurse will arrange dressing changes following your shower.

Sometimes after the drain is removed, there may be some fluid collection in the wound, which your surgeon may need to aspirate.

Resume usual daily activities as tolerated with frequent rest periods. You may tire more easily than usual.

**Resume normal use of your arm for everyday activities.
Avoid pulling on the incision area.**

Moving the arm on the operated side helps regain mobility. Specific exercises may be prescribed according to your surgeon. **YOUR SURGEON WILL DISCUSS ANY SPECIFIC EXERCISES OR RESTRICTIONS.** If indicated, you may be given a physiotherapy pamphlet.

If lymph nodes were removed, you may get a stiff shoulder on the operated side. If it has not improved after 6 weeks, notify your surgeon, as physiotherapy may be required.

If lymph nodes are removed, there may be numbness under the affected arm. This may be present for several months, but is expected to improve.

Return to work as advised by your surgeon.



Call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department if you are experiencing:

- A fever
- Increased drainage or foul-smelling drainage from the incision
- Separation of incision edges or redness around the incision
- Shortness of breath or a cough that you did not have before your surgery

Feelings of anxiety, sadness, fear of looking at the incision area are normal. A Mastectomy means abrupt change in body image. It is normal to mourn the loss of a breast. Sexual intimacy may be affected. It often helps to be able to discuss potential sexual problems with one's partner, with a counselor or a with a breast cancer support group.

After you have had a mastectomy, you may be emotionally overwhelmed. You may think about the fact that you have been treated for a serious disease. You have had an operation that has changed your appearance, perhaps your self-image. You might wonder how the mastectomy will affect your lifestyle and personal relationships. You may be unsure how to act towards family and friends.

Every woman reacts to a mastectomy differently. You can take steps to ease your emotional adjustment. Express your feelings to your doctor and people close to you. This will help your doctor understand what you need to fully recover and it will help your family and friends to share your difficulties and to help you work through them. Your family and friends can be your strongest supporters, but they may not know how to show their support. You can help them by being open and honest about the way you are feeling.

Many women find help in support groups where they can share experiences and learn coping skills. Several studies show that being with others who understand what you are going through can improve the quality of your life. Support groups can help to reduce stress and minimize depression. Having a positive outlook can allow your body to more effectively fight disease.

Support Groups

Quinte Cancer Support Group (613) 961-7366

Picton Cancer Support Group (613) 399-3223

Canadian Cancer Society – Reach to Recovery: One on one peer support for women with breast cancer (613) 962-0686

Additional Resources

Canadian Cancer Society

Hastings and Prince Edward County Unit Office

90 Pinnacle Street South

(613) 962-0686

email: hastings@ccsont.org

website: www.cancer.ca

Appointment

Call your surgeon's office to make a follow-up appointment.

Special Instructions

Questions?

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