

Dr. Hugh McGregor
BSc(Hons) MBBS(Hons) PhD FRACS
**GENERAL SURGEON &
GASTROINTESTINAL ENDOSCOPIST**
Provider 237509VA

Suite 17
Peninsula Specialist Centre
George St.
KIPPA RING QLD, 4020
Telephone 3283 4200
Fax 3284 2739
email: northsidesurgeons@gmail.com

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS – Mastectomy

Axillary node clearance

Please note - Within 24 hours of your Operation YOU MUST NOT:

- Drive a car or take public transport unaccompanied.
- Operate Machinery
- Consume alcohol
- Sign any legal documents or make any responsible decisions.

Analgesia:

- Take Paracetamol / Panadeine 2 Tablets 4-6 Hourly or prescribed analgesia if required.
- Do not drive or operate machinery if taking prescribed medication.

Diet:

- There are no dietary restrictions. Aim to eat nourishing, healthy foods.
- Avoid constipation by increasing your fluid and fibre intake.
- Take a laxative only if needed. Eg. Coloxyl,coloxyl & senna or movicol

Activity:

- Avoid lifting heavy objects greater than 5 kgs or engage in vigorous exercise for a period of 2 weeks.
- You may feel tired for the first few months after your surgery. Rest when you feel tired. You may begin walking short distances a few days after your surgery. Gradually increase the distance or time you walk.
- Slowly increase your activity levels over this time. Light housework and gardening may be undertaken during this time.
- You may drive your car when you can make an emergency stop and take evasive action at the same time and when you feel confident and safe to do so.

Care of Wound:

- Keep the dressing and the area where your drain exits the body clean and dry.
- take a sponge bath until your dressing is removed . You may shower or bath after the drain and dressing has been removed this is about 7 days post op.
- Only remove your dressings if they get wet or become smelly. Cover wound area with clean dressing if necessary. *Do not remove your steri strips*
- The drain and any sutures will be removed at your follow-up appointment.

Drain care:

- *You will have at least one drain in place after your surgery. The drain helps to remove any fluid from your surgical site and prevents infection.*
- Wash your hands before and after to you touch you drain. Place the reservoir on suction once it has been emptied in the bag below taking care to clamp off the suction closest to the wound before you release the suction
- It is very important that the clamp is re opened after the reservoir has been emptied.
- Empty the reservoir before it gets full.
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- Please contact the hospital where you had your procedure immediately if you have:
- Fevers, wound discharge or redness around the wounds.

- Your pain is not being relieved by the analgesia you are using.
- Significant bleeding or drainage from the wound.
- They will contact Dr McGregor on your behalf.

Specimen results will be discussed with you and a copy will be sent to the referring GP.

Lymphedema

Because lymph nodes under your arm were removed, your arm may swell. Your lymph system and nodes help to filter fluids from the upper part of your breast, neck, and underarms. Removing these nodes can disrupt the drainage and filtering of your lymph system on the side where your breast was removed. The collection of too much fluid in the arm is called lymphedema.

· This occurs slowly, several months after surgery.

Symptoms of lymphedema in the affected arm include:

- Feeling of tightness
- Aching or pain
- Swelling in the hand and arm
- Weakness in arm

If you notice any of these symptoms, call your surgery team or your primary care doctor.

You can prevent and control lymphedema by protecting your arm after surgery:

- Don't let anyone draw blood or give you an injection in the arm on the side of your mastectomy
- Carry your handbag or heavy packages with the unaffected arm
- Use an electric shaver when shaving underarms
- Avoid sunburns and other burns to the affected arm
- Make sure that all blood pressure tests are performed on the unaffected arm
- Wear gloves when gardening and when using strong household cleaners
- Do your exercises regularly to improve drainage.
- Eat a well-balanced, low sodium diet
- Avoid extreme hot or cold temperatures on the affected arm
- Take proper care of your fingernails – avoid cutting cuticles
- Clean all cuts with soap and water and then apply antibacterial ointment and a sterile dressing
- Protect your fingers from needle pricks and sharp objects
- Avoid vigorous, repetitive movements such as scrubbing, pulling, and pushing with the affected arm

Expectations

You can expect some swelling, black and blue areas, and some numbness of your arm pit and upper arm after your surgery.

Breast Exams Following Your Surgery

Do monthly breast checks after your surgery. Schedule your follow up mammogram as directed by your doctor.

On-going Care:

- You will see Dr McGregor in one week for a dressing review.
- An appointment will be made for you prior to discharge from Hospital.
- If not, please call our Rooms on 07 3283 4200 to arrange your post operative appointment.

Appointment details:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Remember, this is an important time to take very good care of yourself.