

## Patient information factsheet

# Recovering well after breast surgery (sutures)

We have given you this factsheet because you have had breast surgery (using sutures (stitches) for wound closure). It explains what to expect after your operation and how you can help your body to recover well. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any other questions or concerns, please do ask. We will be happy to help.

### Common symptoms after breast surgery

#### Pain and discomfort

Most women experience some mild pain and/or a tingling sensation in their breast for a few days after the operation. You can take over-the-counter pain relief, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen-based products, to help ease your symptoms. Always read the label or instructions before taking medication.

You can take your next dose of pain relief at \_\_\_\_\_ (time).

#### Bruising and swelling

Bruising is common in the first few weeks after your operation, but it will disappear over time. However, some women may then develop a hard, tense bruise around their wound (this is called a haematoma).

Swelling is also common in the first few weeks after your operation and will usually settle over time. However, some women may then develop a collection of fluid under their skin near their wound (this is called a seroma).

If either a haematoma or a seroma develops, please contact our breast care nurses or your GP for advice.

## When to seek medical advice

Most women recover well after breast surgery. However, as with any operation, there can be complications.

Contact Bramshaw Women's Unit on **023 8120 6035** (up to two weeks after your operation) or contact your GP or NHS **111** if you experience:

- increasing breast pain and/or swelling
- a temperature (fever)
- a loss of appetite and vomiting (being sick)
- any difficulty passing urine or emptying your bladder, a burning or stinging sensation when passing urine or passing urine more often than usual
- a painful, red, swollen, hot leg or difficulty bearing weight on your legs (this may be caused by a deep vein thrombosis (DVT))
- difficulty breathing

## Recovering from your operation

### Wound closure

Your wound will be closed with either dissolvable stitches or stitches that need to be removed. Before you leave hospital, your nurse will give you information on which type of stitches you have and advice on where to have the stitches removed if needed. If you have stitches that need to be removed, this will usually be done seven to ten days after your operation.

A surgical drain (a small plastic tube attached to a small bag) may have been inserted into your wound to help drain away fluid that might gather up and cause an infection after your operation. If a surgical drain has been inserted, we will give you a separate information factsheet about this.

If you have any concerns with how your wound is healing, contact our breast care nurses during office hours (please see below) or Bramshaw Women's Unit out of hours.

### Dressings

After your operation, your wound will be covered in a splash-proof dressing. Please keep this dry for the first 48 hours. Seven to ten days after your operation, you will be able to remove this dressing. We will give you an extra dressing when you leave hospital. Please use this extra dressing if:

- your dressing gets wet
- your wound weeps

It is important that you wash your hands with soap and water before changing your dressing.

### Washing

You may bathe and shower as normal 48 hours after your operation. However, you should try to keep your dressing dry, as it may fall off.

Once your dressing has been removed (usually after seven to ten days), you should avoid rubbing soap or shower gel directly into your wound. You should also gently pat dry the area around your wound with a clean towel. Do not pick any scabs that form, as these protect the new skin that is growing underneath.

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If you had a general anaesthetic, you may feel dizzy for a couple of days after your operation so please have an adult around to help you, if needed, and keep the bathroom door unlocked.

## Eating and drinking

You can eat and drink as normal after your operation.

## Wearing a bra

You should wear a well-fitting, supportive bra after your operation. You may find it more comfortable to wear a bra all the time (day and night) while you recover.

## Advice after an anaesthetic and/or sedation

For the first 48 hours after your operation, you may feel more sleepy than usual and your judgement may be impaired. During this time, you must not:

- drive (your insurance company will have its own conditions for when you are insured to start driving again, so it is important you check your policy)
- drink alcohol
- work
- exercise
- handle machinery (including an oven or hob)
- sign any legal documents

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Bramshaw Women's Unit  
Telephone: **023 8120 6035**

Breast care nurses  
Telephone: **023 8120 3753** (Monday to Thursday, 8am to 4pm, and Friday, 8am to 1pm)

## Useful links

Royal College of Surgeons of England  
Website: **[www.rcseng.ac.uk](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk)**

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **[www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)**