



NORTHEAST PLASTIC SURGERY  
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## **Breast Reconstruction: Free Flap Post-operative Instructions**

- Your post-operative appointment is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_.
- Empty your drains every 12 hours and record the measured quantities for each drain, separately, on your chart. Please bring the chart with you to your office visits. The amounts that are draining from each drain will determine when the drains may be removed. The drains may take up to 2 weeks before they may be removed. Once the drains are removed, you should keep a dry gauze dressing for 48 hours over the former sites on the skin to prevent drainage onto your clothing.
- Sponge-bathe only until further instructed. Usually, you may shower 48 hours after the final drain is removed.
- Apply a thin layer of Bacitracin ointment 1-2 times daily to your belly button and cover it with a Telfa nonadherent dressing.
- If a liquid skin adhesive (glue) was used along your incisions, it may take 2 weeks to dissolve. Do not apply Bacitracin directly over the glued area unless instructed as this may prematurely dissolve this dressing. If Steri-Strips were used over your incisions, do not peel them off. Once they begin to curl at their edges, you may trim the curled edges with a pair of scissors.
- You have been provided with a surgical bra postoperatively to wear for support. Please utilize this garment at all times unless instructed otherwise. Remove twice daily to assess for skin changes.
- Do not wear an abdominal binder unless specifically instructed to do so.
- You have received prescriptions for \_\_\_\_\_ as an antibiotic and \_\_\_\_\_ for pain relief. You may alternatively take Tylenol for pain relief. You may stop taking your antibiotic after the final drain has been removed. Please take Colace as a stool softener to limit abdominal straining and constipation.
- Please take Enteric Coated Aspirin (ECASA) 325 mg daily until 1 month after your surgery.
- Dr. Pathy may ask you to avoid certain types of medication, as they may result in a higher risk of bleeding. If you are taking blood thinners such as Coumadin or Lovenox, your regimen will be coordinated with your Coumadin Clinic and medical physicians.
- You may resume your pre-operative diet as tolerated.
- Restrictions are as follows:
  - Contact us immediately if you notice any of the following: change in color of the breast flap or abdomen, firmness at the breast flap, increased pain, bleeding blistering, redness, drainage from the incisions, sudden increase in drain output.
  - Lay down in a flexed position for at least 2 weeks. Do not lay on your sides for 6 weeks.
  - You must walk in a flexed position for at least 1 week post-operatively, and then gradually stand more erect.
  - Avoid all spinal twisting for 2 weeks, then you may gradually increase movements towards each side.
  - No driving for at least 3 weeks. You will be restricted from driving until all narcotic medications have been stopped.
  - No heavy lifting (> 5 lb) for 6 weeks.
  - Avoid vigorous running, jumping, and pulling for 8 weeks.
  - Avoid hot or cold packs against your skin, as burns and other skin changes may occur because of sensory changes.
- Please refrain from nicotine-containing products for at least 6 weeks following your surgery. Nicotine reduces circulation and can therefore result in wound healing impairment.
- There are a number of different modalities that can limit scar formation post-operatively. Starting 2 weeks post-operatively, we normally recommend that you utilize Epi-Derm™ Silicone Gel Strips from Biodermis™. This therapy may be purchased through [www.biodermis.com](http://www.biodermis.com). Silicone sheets should be applied overlying the healing scar for at least 12 hours daily, and ideally closer to 24 hours daily, with gentle cleansing of the scar performed once daily. An individual sheet may be re-used multiple times, with the average lifespan being 7-10 days. Alternatively, you may choose to utilize any number of silicone scar reduction gels (Kelocote®, Mederma®), and massage in a thin coat twice daily to the scar, for 2-3 months.