



NORTHEAST PLASTIC SURGERY  
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## **Breast Reconstruction: Tissue Expander Post-operative Instructions**

- Your post-operative appointment is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_.
- Do not remove your dressings. Your dressings will be removed during your first office visit.
- Bring your chest garment to your first post-operative visit, as your garment will be placed on you at that time. The garment will be worn for support during the expansion process. You may place gauze sponges inside your garment for added comfort.
- Empty your drain every 12 hours and record the measured quantities on your chart. Please bring the chart with you to your office visits. The amount that is draining from the drain(s) will determine when the drain(s) may be removed. The drain(s) are usually removed as early as 7 days but may take 2 weeks to meet criteria for removal. Once the drain(s) are removed, you should keep a dry gauze dressing over the former site(s) on the skin for 48 hours to prevent drainage onto your clothing.
- Keep your dressings dry. Sponge-bathe only until further instructed. Usually, you may shower 48 hours after final drain removal.
- Your office-based tissue expansion will usually begin the week following final drain removal, but no earlier than 2 weeks post-operatively.
- If a liquid skin adhesive (glue) was used along your incisions, it may take 2 weeks to dissolve. Do not apply ointments such as 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 received prescriptions for \_\_\_\_\_ as an antibiotic, \_\_\_\_\_ for muscle spasms, 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.
- Avoid aspirin, ibuprofen products (Advil, Motrin), Aleve, Naprosyn, Celebrex, Toradol and products containing Vitamin E for 1 week following your surgery, as they 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:
  - You may walk as tolerated beginning the day of your surgery.
  - Do not lay flat in bed. Sleep with your head elevated on at least 2 pillows for 2 weeks. Do not lay on your sides for 6 weeks.
  - No driving for 2 weeks. You will be restricted from driving until all narcotic and muscle relaxant medications have been stopped.
  - No raising your arm(s) above shoulder level for 2 weeks. No heavy lifting (> 5 lb) for 4 weeks. No strenuous pulling or pushing for 4 weeks. No upper body workout for 6 weeks.
- Please refrain from nicotine-containing products for at least 4 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.

Please contact us with any additional questions or concerns.