# Breast Reconstruction
# (with Implant or Tissue Expander Insertion)
## Care After Surgery

There are several types of reconstruction surgery. Depending on what type you had, these discharge instructions provide you with general information on caring for yourself after you leave the hospital. Your surgeon may also give you specific instructions. Please read these instructions. Refer to them in the next few weeks. While your treatment has been planned according to the most current medical practices available, unavoidable complications occasionally occur. If you have any problems, call your caregiver.

### ACTIVITY

- Rest as much as possible, for your first 2 weeks at home.
- Avoid standing for long periods of time. Do no heavy lifting (more than 3 pounds) with the arm(s) on your affected side(s).
- **No overhead reaching, pulling, or stretching. No vacuuming or mopping, because of the stretching involved.**
- Follow your caregiver's instructions about driving a car.
- Do not drink alcohol, or drink as little as possible.
- Do not take hormones without your caregiver's permission.
- Exercise for 30 minutes, 3 to 5 times a week.
- Eat a balanced diet, high in fiber.
- Do not expose yourself to pesticides.

### HYGIENE

- You may bathe in the tub or sponge bathe.
- Do not shower unless approved by your caregiver.
- You may wash your hair, but keep dressings (*wound coverings*) completely dry and intact.
- **Do not use deodorants, or shave the armpits, on the affected side(s).**

### CARE OF YOUR INCISION

- Keep dressings dry and intact, until your follow up visit.
- Unless otherwise instructed, wear a supportive bra or surgical bra (if you were given one).
- If you go home with Jackson-Pratt (JP) drains, refer to the booklet and instructions given by your caregiver. If the drains were removed, keep the dressing dry and intact over the site where the drains were previously inserted.

### HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow up with your surgeon as instructed.
- Continue self examination of the other breast.
- Keep your arms and elbows at your sides and keep your arm movements within the limits set by your caregiver and/or physical therapist or occupational therapist.
- Do not sleep on your stomach or press anything against your chest (such as holding a small child) for 2 to 4 weeks.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. Do not take any product containing aspirin. It can cause bleeding.
- Muscle/chest soreness is normal.
- If drains were present, slight drainage is normal, especially for 24 hours.
- Continue with mammograms as instructed by your caregiver.

## SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- There is bleeding, swelling or redness from or around the wound.
- Your wound is opening up.
- The edges of your wound are turning black.
- You develop swelling in the arm on the side that the surgery was performed.

## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Muscle/chest pain is increasing or accompanied by fever or numbness/tingling in either arm.
- Drainage of fluids becomes heavy or includes redness or swelling at the incision or drain site(s).
- One breast becomes larger than the other (especially if implants were inserted).

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