Mastectomy (Total or Modified Radical)
Care After Surgery

These discharge instructions provide you with general information on caring for yourself after you leave the hospital. While your treatment has been planned according to the most current medical practices available, unavoidable complications may occur. It is important that you know the warning signs of complications so that you can seek treatment. Please read the instructions outlined below and refer to this sheet in the next few weeks. Your caregiver may also give you specific information. If you have any complications or questions after discharge, please call your caregiver.

ACTIVITY

- Your caregiver will advise you when you may resume strenuous activities, driving, and sports.
- After the drain(s) are removed, you may do light housework. Avoid heavy lifting, carrying, or pushing. You should not be lifting anything heavier than 5 lbs.
- Take frequent rest periods. You may tire more easily than usual.
- Always rest and elevate the arm affected by your surgery for a period of time equal to your activity time.
- Continue doing the exercises given to you by the physical therapist/occupational therapist even after full range of motion has returned. The amount of time this takes will vary from person to person.
- After normal range of motion has returned, some stiffness and soreness may persist for 2-3 months. This is normal and will subside.
- Begin sports or strenuous activities in moderation. This will give you a chance to rebuild your endurance. Continue to be cautious of heavy lifting or carrying (no more than 10 lbs.) with your affected arm.
- You may return to work as recommended by your caregiver.

NUTRITION

- You may resume your normal diet.
- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids (6-8 glasses a day).
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Including daily portions of food from government recommended food groups:
  - Grains.
  - Vegetables.
  - Fruits.
  - Milk.
  - Meat & beans.
  - Oils.
  - Visit http://mypyramid.gov/ for more information

HYGIENE

- You may wash your hair.
- If your *incision* (cut from surgery) is closed, you may shower or tub bathe, unless instructed otherwise by your doctor.

FEVER

- Take your temperature if you feel feverish or have shaking chills. Call your caregiver if your temperature is 100.4° F (38° C) or above. The fever may mean there is an infection.
- If you call early, infection can be treated with antibiotics and hospitalization *may* be avoided.

PAIN CONTROL

- Mild discomfort may occur.
- You may need to take an over-the-counter pain medication or a medication prescribed by your caregiver.
- Call your caregiver if you experience increased pain.

INCISION CARE

- Check your incision daily for increased redness, drainage, swelling, or separation of skin.

- Call your caregiver if any of the above are noted.

ARM AND HAND CARE

- If the lymph nodes under your arm were removed with a modified radical mastectomy, there may be a greater tendency for the arm to swell.
- Try to avoid having blood pressures taken, blood drawn, or injections given in the affected arm. This is the arm on the same side as the surgery.
- Use hand lotion to soften cuticles instead of cutting them to avoid cutting yourself.
- Be careful when shaving your under arms. Use an electric shaver if possible. You may use a deodorant after the incision has completely healed. Until then, clean under your arms with hydrogen peroxide.
- Use reasonable precaution when cooking, sewing, and gardening to avoid burning or needle or thorn pricks.
- Do not weigh your arm straight down with a package or your purse.
- *Follow the exercises and instructions given to you by the physical therapist/occupational therapist and your caregiver.*

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT

Call your caregiver for a follow-up appointment as directed.

PROSTHESIS INFORMATION

Wear your temporary *prosthesis* (artificial breast) until your caregiver gives you permission to purchase a permanent one. This will depend upon your rate of healing. We suggest you also wait until you are physically and emotionally ready to shop for one. The suitability depends on several individual factors. We do not endorse any particular prosthesis, but suggest you try several until you are satisfied with appearance and fit. ***A list of stores may be obtained from your local American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org or 1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2345).***

A permanent prosthesis is medically necessary to restore balance. It is also income tax deductible. Be sure all receipts are marked "surgical". It is not essential to purchase a bra. You may sew a pocket into your regular bra.

Note: Remember to take all of your medical insurance information with you when shopping for your prosthesis.

SELECTING A PROSTHESIS FITTER

You may want to ask the following questions when selecting a fitter:

- What styles and brands of forms are carried in stock?
- How long have the forms been on the market and have there been any problems with them?
- Why would one form be better than another?
- How long should a particular form last?
- May I wear the form for a trial period without obligation?
- Do the forms require a prosthetic bra? If so, what is the price range? Must I always wear that style?
- If alterations to the bra are necessary, can they be done at this location or be sent out?
- Will I be charged for alterations?
- Will I receive suggestions on how to alter my own wardrobe, if necessary?
- Will you special order forms or bras if necessary?
- Are fitters always available to meet my needs?
- What kinds of garments should be worn for the fitting?
- Are lounge wear, swim wear, and accessories available?
- If I have insurance coverage or Medicare, will you suggest ways for processing the paper work?
- Do you keep complete records so that mail reordering is possible?
- How are warranty claims handled if I have a problem with the form?

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