Segmental Mastectomy and Axillary Lymph Node Dissection

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 occasionally 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 doctor may also give you *specific* information. If you have any complications or questions after discharge, please call your doctor.

ACTIVITY

- Your doctor will tell you when you may resume strenuous activities, driving and sports. After the drain(s) are removed, you may do light housework, but 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. Generally, after normal range of motion has returned, some stiffness and soreness may persist for 2-3 months. This is normal and should subside.
- Begin sports or strenuous activities in moderation, giving you a chance to rebuild your endurance.
- Continue to be cautious of heavy lifting or carrying (not more than 10 lbs.) with the affected arm. You may return to work as recommended by your doctor.

NUTRITION

- You may resume your normal diet.
- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids (6-8 glasses per day).
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Daily portions of food from the grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat and beans families are necessary for your health. You may visit http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/ for more dietary information.

HYGIENE

- You may wash your hair.
- If your *incision* (the cut from surgery) is healed, you may shower or take a bath, unless instructed otherwise by your caregiver.

FEVER

If you feel feverish or have shaking chills, take your temperature. If your temperature is 100.4° F (38° C) or above, call your doctor. 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 doctor.
- Call your doctor if you experience increased pain.

INCISION CARE

Check your incision daily for increased redness, drainage, swelling or separation of skin edges. Call your doctor

if any of the above are noted.

DRAIN CARE

If you have a drain in place, ask for instructions for “Surgical Drain Care”.

ARM AND HAND CARE

- Since the lymph nodes under your arm have been removed, there may be a greater chance for the arm to swell.
- Avoid, if possible, having blood pressures taken, blood drawn or injections given in the affected arm.
- Use hand lotion to soften fingernail cuticles instead of cutting them to avoid cutting yourself.
- Use an electric shaver to shave your underarms.
- You may use a deodorant after the incision has completely healed.
- Be careful not to cut yourself when cooking, sewing or gardening.
- Do not weigh your arm straight down with a package or your purse.

Note: Follow the exercises and instructions given to you by the physical therapist/occupational therapist and your treating doctor.

Document Released: 08/10/2005 Document Re-Released: 06/15/2009
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