



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Breast Surgery

Discharge Information for patients,  
relatives and carers

## **Breast Unit**

① For more information, please contact:

The Breast Care Nurses central contact line

Tel: 01904 726775

The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE



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# **You have had the following surgery:**

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## **How was my wound closed?**

Your wound has been closed with stitches that sit underneath your skin. They will dissolve and do not need to be removed.

## **What dressings have been applied to my wound?**

A clear plastic dressing has been applied to your wound. The dressing is splash proof, so you may bathe as you normally would, avoid soaking the dressing under water.

The dressing can usually remain in place until your follow-up appointment. As long as the wound is clean and dry do not worry if it comes off after seven days. If fluid is trapped beneath your dressing and it becomes dark or discoloured, you are advised to remove the dressing and replace it if it has been in place for less than seven days. If you have any concerns, for example if your wound is leaking, please contact your Breast Care Nurse for advice. Your Breast Care Nurse can be contacted by telephoning 01904 726775.

## **What to expect after my surgery**

Your dressing will be checked by a member of the medical team daily before you are discharged home.

Depending on the type of surgery you have had you may experience bruising around your wound, breast and armpit (axilla). This tends to appear the day after surgery and can look quite alarming; however, it is not unusual, so do not worry.

If you have had a Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy, a blue dye called Patent Blue V may have been used. This causes your skin to change colour during the first 24 hours following your surgery. You may look a grey, green or blue colour. Your urine and faeces may also be stained blue or green. The skin around your nipple will also be stained blue. This staining gradually disappears but it can be noticeable for up to 6 to 12 months in some cases.

Your wound may become hard along the scar, which in time can become lumpy. This is due to the healing process and will usually disappear. Some patients may experience tingling, numbness, pulling and itching as their wound heals. These sensations at the wound site are normal and are part of the healing process.

If you have had surgery to your armpit (axilla), it is normal to experience tingling and loss of sensation in the skin close to your wound and upper arm. Your surgeon will have explained to you before your surgery that this may be a long-term side effect of your surgery.

# What should I look for as my wound heals?

Signs and symptoms that indicate that there might be a problem with your wound healing include:

- Increased redness, swelling or tightness around your wound which feels hard to touch;
- A throbbing pain;
- Limited arm movement;
- Extreme leakage or cloudy discharge;
- Feeling generally unwell.

If you experience any of these signs or symptoms, or have any other concerns please contact your Breast Care Nurse, Monday to Friday between the hours of 8.30am and 5pm on telephone number 01904 726775.

At any other time please contact an out of hours GP, or the ward that you were on:

Extended Stay Ward: 01904 721265

Ward 29: 01904 726029

## **What do I do if I'm being sent home with drains in?**

If you have a drain, you can expect to go home with it in place. This allows any tissue fluid to be drained and reduces the chance of having a seroma (a build-up of clear body fluids).

If you are going home with drains in place, please complete the drain chart on the following page. You will have been informed of your required draining level (normally 50mls or less, however you will be told this amount on discharge).

Each morning at a similar time of day, stand the bottle on a flat surface and mark the fluid level. If the new level shows 50mls (or your specified amount) or less has drained over the past 24 hours, then the drain can be removed.

Drains will usually be removed after a maximum of seven days following your operation even if it is still draining fluid.

Your drain may lose its suction. Your nurse will explain to you how to recognise this before you are discharged. If your drain does lose its suction or is accidentally pulled out or falls out, do not worry. Please contact your Breast Care Nurse or ward.

## Your record sheet

<b>Date</b>	<b>Fluid level</b>	<b>Drainage over 24 hours</b>



# **When it is time for your drain to be removed, or if you have any problems with your drain**

Please contact the hospital nearest where you live:

## **York based patients**

Please contact the Breast Care Nurse's central line on 01904 726775.

## **Scarborough based patients**

Please contact Oak ward on 01723 342102.

## **Bridlington based patients**

Please contact Lloyd ward on 01262 423134.

## **Will I get a seroma?**

A seroma is a collection of fluid, which will cause a swelling at your operation site.

If you've had a drain, a seroma can occur after it's removed. This can feel like a balloon full of water under the skin.

This can easily be drained by one of the Breast Team by inserting a small needle into the space. This is normally quite painless as the operation area remains quite numb for several weeks.

If you think you have developed a seroma, please contact your Breast Care Nurse.

## **How much pain will I have?**

You may experience pain around your wound following your operation. The amount varies as every patient is different. The amount of pain should reduce as the days go by. Local anaesthetic may have been placed around your operation site during the operation. This helps with any pain during the first 6-12 hours following your operation.

Simple over the counter pain relief can be used, please have a stock available at home for discharge. Please make sure you read the instructions carefully and take them only as directed. You are advised to take your painkillers regularly over the first few days following your operation. As you begin to feel better you will not need to take as many pain killers. You should reduce the amount you take gradually rather than suddenly.

If your pain is severe and affecting your sleep, contact your Breast Care Nurse.

## **When can I resume my normal activities?**

This will depend upon your usual level of activity, your general health and the type of operation you have had.

Moderate activity following your operation will help your recovery. If you try something and it hurts, stop and try it again a few days later. It is important that you do not do anything that strains your wound. You may need a little help with your domestic activities such as shopping and cleaning. You will need to avoid swimming and driving for a couple of weeks. Before going back to driving, you must be confident that you would be able to safely perform an emergency stop, and have full control of your vehicle.

A fit note can be provided for those who require time off work. Please ask about this before being discharged from the ward. If you require further time off work please contact your GP to extend your fit note.

## **When should I remove the surgical stockings?**

If you had a general anaesthetic (where you are asleep), you will have been given a pair of compression stockings to wear just before going to Theatre. You will also have been given a Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) information leaflet which tells you why we advise you to wear them.

We advise that you continue to wear them for one week following your operation, or until you feel you have resumed your normal level of mobility.

## **When can I start my arm exercises?**

Depending on the type of operation that you have had you may be given a booklet by your Breast Care Nurse on arm exercises. It is alright to begin with gentle exercises such as brushing your hair on the first day after your operation, then build up the exercises as you feel able.

## **I have had a mastectomy when will I have my prosthesis fitted?**

Before you go home from hospital, the nurse looking after you will fit you with a “softie”. This is a very soft lightweight and temporary prosthesis. Your Breast Care Nurse will arrange an appointment for you with the Prosthesis Fitting Nurse approximately six weeks after your surgery. This will have given your wound enough time to heal.

This can be arranged at your next outpatients’ appointment.

## **Will I have a follow up appointment?**

You will normally be seen in the Out Patients Department in the Breast Unit, at Scarborough or York Hospital, two to three weeks after your operation. The date and time of your appointment will be posted out to you.

If you have any concerns at all about your recovery, please contact your Breast Care Nurse.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:  
Deborah Thomson, Breast Nurse Practitioner,  
Breast Unit, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York,  
YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 725116 or email  
deborah.thomson@york.nhs.uk.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email  
pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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