

Post-Operative Flap Instructions
Aesthetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgery
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General Latissimus/TRAM/DIEP flaps:

1. You can expect to stay in the hospital for two to five days dependent on your recovery. It is recommended to have an adult available to help care for you the first 24-48 hours after surgery.
2. Immediately post-op you will have IV fluids and an IV pain pump that you may control. If this is not controlling your pain, you need to let your nursing staff know right away. You will start on clear liquids and progress to a regular diet as tolerated. As soon as you are eating some regular foods, you will be offered oral pain medication and the IV pain medication will be weaned. Once home, if you have pain or discomfort, take the pain medication every 4-6 hours. Alcohol must be avoided while on pain medication. Please be aware that pain medication can cause constipation. You can start a stool softener before surgery, drink plenty of water, drink prune juice, or use a laxative if needed.
3. You will be prescribed an antibiotic, complete entire prescribed antibiotic prescription.
4. Begin with a light diet after surgery. Examples are jello, broth, and popsicles. It is best to take pain medicine with toast or crackers to prevent an upset stomach. Slowly progress to a regular diet as tolerated.
5. Drains will be used. These drains will remove any excess fluid that may develop. It is important to track how much fluid is emptied. The fluid will need to be emptied twice a day, more if needed. Please keep a record and bring this with you to each appointment. If the drain falls out—DO NOT attempt to push it back in. This may cause an infection. Remove the drain if it has fallen out and cover the opening with dry gauze. The opening will close within 24-48 hours.
6. You will have a urinary catheter in place for the first day or so. This will be removed as soon as you are able to get out of bed with assistance and use a bedside commode/toilet.
7. You may shower on your second post-op day. Remove all dressings and check incisions. Clean with mild soap and water. Gently pat dry and cover with gauze.
8. Bruising, swelling, numbness, and tightness are common. These will subside over the next several weeks to months.
9. NEVER use a heat or cold pack on surgical areas.

Activity:

1. Avoid strenuous activity. Absolutely no lifting with affected arm for the first two weeks following surgery. It is important to get out of bed and do light walking as soon as possible to reduce the risk of blood clots and other complications. General activities of daily living may be resumed within a couple of days. This does NOT include mopping, waxing floors, vacuuming, moving furniture, lifting children, groceries, laundry, or

mowing. If you notice discomfort, decrease the amount of activity you are doing. Listen to your body...If it hurts, don't do it.

2. Follow physical therapy protocol for shoulder and elbow movement. Absolutely no lifting with affected arm for the first two weeks following surgery. After about 3-4 weeks, limit lifting up to 5 pounds. Lifting may then slowly progress to 10 pounds (a gallon of milk).
3. Avoid lifting objects heavier than 10 pounds for 4-6 weeks. No strenuous activity.
4. Do not lie on the side surgery was performed.
5. Sleeping with you head and shoulders elevated is recommended. Use at least two pillows behind your back to prop yourself. Refrain from bending forward for the first week following surgery.
6. Do not shave under the affected arm while healing is occurring.
7. Sexual activity should be avoided for two weeks following surgery.
8. No driving until after two weeks and cleared by your healthcare provider. You may not drive if you are still taking prescription pain medication.
9. You will be given a bra at post-op appointment. Please wear 24 hours/7 days minus shower time, for 4-6 weeks. No underwire bra until healing is complete and cleared by healthcare provider.
10. You may begin breast massage as directed in about 2-3 weeks after surgery. This will help decrease formation of scarring.
11. All incisions will be extremely sensitive to sunlight during the healing phase. Direct sun contact is to be avoided and use a sunscreen with UVA/UVB 30 or greater for 6 months to one year.
12. A follow-up appointment will be scheduled after your discharge from a member of the plastic surgery team.

Specific to flap type:

Latissimus Dorsi Flap:

Drains: 2 in back and 2 in breast.

Lifting: Limit up to 5 pounds after 3-4 weeks, then slowly progress to 10 pounds.

Incision: On back and breast

Tram/DIEP Flap:

Drains: 2-4 in abdomen, 2 in breast

Incision: Bikini line incision from hip bone to hip bone and a circumferential incision around the flap of the breast. An abdominal binder will be worn for 4-6 weeks.

-The first few days there will be close monitoring of the pulses in the transplanted breast/flap.

IMPORTANT- Call the office or on call plastic surgery resident (317) 274- 5000 for any increased redness, swelling, foul-smelling wound drainage, wound separation, severe/uncontrolled pain or temperature >101.5.

Do not hesitate to call for any other questions or concerns.