



NORTHEAST PLASTIC SURGERY  
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## **Tissue Expander**

### Post-operative Instructions

- ▶ Your post-operative appointment is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_.
- ▶ Do not remove your dressings. Your dressings will be removed at your first post-operative visit. Keep your sports bra or breast reconstruction garment in place. The garment will be worn for at least 4-6 weeks. Do not wear an underwire bra for at least 3 months post-operatively.
- ▶ Keep your dressings dry. Sponge-bathe only until further instructed at your first post-operative visit.
- ▶ Empty your drains every 12 hours and record the measurements for each drain, separately and labeled by side, on your chart. Please bring the chart with you to your office visits. The amounts that are draining from each drain will determine when each drain may be removed. The drains are usually removed within 3 weeks, but a number of factors can influence the duration. Once each drain is removed, you should keep a dry gauze dressing for 48 hours over the former sites on the skin to prevent drainage onto your clothing but then may discontinue the drain dressings altogether after those 48 hours.
- ▶ Your office-based tissue expansions will usually begin the week following final drain removal, but no earlier than 3 weeks post-operatively.
- ▶ If a liquid skin adhesive (glue) was used along your incisions, it may take several weeks to dissolve. Do not apply ointments such as Bacitracin directly over the glued area unless instructed, as this may prematurely dissolve this dressing.
- ▶ You have received prescriptions for \_\_\_\_\_ as an antibiotic, \_\_\_\_\_ for pain relief, and \_\_\_\_\_ for muscle relaxation if the expander was placed in a submuscular pocket. You may alternatively take Tylenol for pain relief. Please take Colace as a stool softener to limit constipation.
- ▶ Do not consume alcohol while you are taking any medications following surgery, especially pain medications, muscle relaxants, anti-anxiety medications, sleeping pills, or other sedatives.
- ▶ Avoid the following anti-platelet agents until at least your first post-op appointment, including, but not limited, to: ibuprofen products (Advil, Motrin), Aleve, Naprosyn, Celebrex, Toradol, fish oil, herbals, and supplements including those containing Vitamin E, as they result in a higher risk of bleeding.

- ▶ If you are taking the following blood thinners or anti-platelet agents, you should have already obtained instructions pre-operatively when they may resume, but please discuss with your surgical team: aspirin, Coumadin (warfarin), Lovenox, Plavix, Pletal, Effient, Aggrenox, Pradaxa, Savaysa, Xerelto, Eliquis, or Brilinta.
- ▶ You may resume your pre-operative diet as tolerated.
- ▶ Restrictions are as follows:
  - ▶ Do not lay flat in bed. Sleep with your head elevated on at least 2 pillows for 2 weeks. Do not lay on your sides for 6 weeks.
  - ▶ You may walk as tolerated beginning the day of your surgery.
  - ▶ No driving for 2 weeks. You will be restricted from driving until all narcotic and muscle relaxant medications have been stopped.
  - ▶ No heavy lifting (> 5 lbs) for 4 weeks.
  - ▶ No strenuous pulling or pushing for 4 weeks.
  - ▶ No vigorous upper body workout for 6 weeks.
  - ▶ Avoid hot or cold packs against your skin, as skin changes may occur because of sensory changes.
- ▶ Because of the nature of your procedure, you may be at unintended risk of taking shallow breaths to limit your post-operative discomfort. However, shallow breathing can result fevers related to underuse of the lungs, and even pneumonia. Please make sure to utilize an incentive spirometer to ensure deep, active breaths to prevent these issues.
- ▶ Please refrain from nicotine-containing products for at least 4 weeks following your surgery. Nicotine reduces circulation and can therefore result in wound healing impairment. It may also increase your risk of capsular contracture formation.
- ▶ Every patient and procedure is unique. However, please alert us if you observe any of the following and are concerned:
  - ▷ temperature  $\geq 101.4^{\circ}\text{F}$
  - ▷ increased redness at the surgical site or adjacent site(s)
  - ▷ worsening bruising at the surgical or adjacent site(s)
  - ▷ blisters at the surgical site(s)
  - ▷ increased swelling or size leading to significant and sudden asymmetry
  - ▷ unremitting or increasing pain at the surgical site(s)
  - ▷ significant drainage at the surgical site
- ▶ There are a number of different modalities that can limit scar formation post-operatively. Starting 2 weeks post-operatively, we normally recommend that you utilize silicone sheeting such as Epi-Derm™ Silicone Gel Strips from Biodermis™. This therapy may be purchased directly through [www.biodermis.com](http://www.biodermis.com). Silicone sheets should be applied overlying the healing scar for at least 12 hours daily, and ideally closer to 24 hours daily, with gentle cleansing of the scar performed once daily. An individual sheet may be re-used multiple times, with the average lifespan being 7-10 days. Alternatively, you may choose to utilize any number of silicone scar reduction gels, such as Mederma® or Biocorneum®, and massage in a thin coat twice daily to the scar for 2-3 months. We recommend silicone gel with the added embedded SPF component.

Please contact us with any additional questions or concerns.