TUAN A. TRAN M.D., M.B.A, F.A.C.S.

Diplomate American Board of Plastic Surgery, Diplomate American Board of Surgery

General Surgery, Reconstructive Surgery, Aesthetic Surgery, Plastic and Hand Surgery

Breast Replacement
Post-Operative Instructions

After Surgery

- You will leave the hospital within 1-2 days following your surgery.
- Make sure to arrange for your transportation accordingly.
- During the first week, rest or sleep on your back slightly propped up in a recliner position so that you're comfortable. Do not lie on your side or stomach. This will help your implants stay in the best position during your healing process.
- Take your antibiotic and pain medications as prescribed to prevent infection and manage pain.
- Limit your activities for the first week after surgery. You may perform daily living activities, such as reaching for something in the cabinet, brushing your hair, eating etc.
- Light activities will actually help improve your range of motion and prevent stiffness.
- At your first post-op appointment, we will further review specific range of motion exercises you may do.

Care for the Surgical Site

- The surgical bra you wear leaving the hospital is designed to hold the dressing in place and has the ability to hold your JP drains. When your drains are removed, you will go into a more shaping and supportive bra for 6-12 weeks. Remain in the surgical bra until evaluated at your first post-op appointment. No showering while drains are in place.
- DO NOT remove the white bandage strips (Steri-Strips) that lie on top of your incisions. They will fall off on their own in about 10-14 days. (You will be able to shower in these bandage strips, but you may not do so until the drains are removed). Once the Steri-Strips fall off, you may begin scar massage and/or silicone scar sheets. You can gently remove your Steri-Strips if they have not fallen off by week 3 after surgery. You can do this while you are in the shower and they will gently peel off like a Band-Aid.
- Your drains will stay in for at least 7 days and be removed in the office by Dr. Tran. The sutures holding the drains in place are the only ones that need to be removed.
- Dr. Tran uses dissolvable sutures on the breast incision. There is no need to remove these sutures. Do not be alarmed if a suture pokes through the skin. This can be easily removed in the office.

Jackson-Pratt (JP) Drains

To prevent the buildup of blood and fluid from occurring in the surgical site, therefore reducing risk of infection.

How to care for your drain

- The collection bulb should always be collapsed (flat) to maintain continuous suction
- The bulb needs to be emptied when it is filled with fluid or the bulb is no longer on suction
- The bulb may be pinned to clothing with a safety pin to prevent it from being dislodged or pulled
- Surgeon will usually remove the bulb when drainage is below 25~30 mL/day for two consecutive day



Figure 1

10301 Bolsa Ave Ste 101 Phone 714-839-8000 Email graphsurgery@gmail.com
Westminster, CA 92683 Fax 714-839-8008 Website www.tranplastic.com

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Emptying the drains

- Please strip the drain three times a day
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching the JP drain.
- Uncap the drain and empty the contents into the measuring cup- note the amount in mL (Figure 2).
- Squeeze the center of the bulb and recap with drain plug (Figure 3).
- Record the time, amount of drainage and which drain it came from on the flowsheet cubic centimeter or milliliters (1 cubic centimeter = 1 milliliters)
- Discard the drain contents in the toilet.
- Keep the drain apparatus clean at all times.
- Bring the spreadsheet to the clinic for discussion.



Figure 2



Figure 3

How to strip a JP drain of clogs

This procedure is performed when the drain is clogged and not draining

- Pinch the tubing as close to the dressing or body with your nondominant hand.
- Then use dominant hand to pinch the tubing near the first hand.
- Milking or stripping the drain is performed by sliding two fingers along the tubing towards the bulb (Figure 4).
- Repeat the steps above until obstruction is cleared.

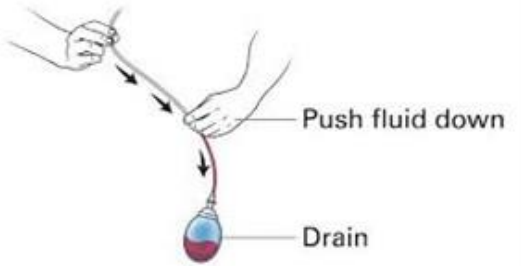

Figure 4

What to expect?

Do not panic if your nipple develops a scab, changes shape or becomes faint in color. This can occur because the tissue beneath the nipple has been removed during the mastectomy.

Your breasts will be high and seem very tight after surgery. This is normal and expected. Do not worry about the implant position, as this will settle and soften over the next 12 weeks. You may have irregularities in your skin and/or bruising. This is also normal and part of the healing process.

Follow-up

At your pre-operative appointment, our office staff will schedule your post-op appointment between 5-7 days following your procedure. At this appointment, Dr. Tran will check up on your wound and provide you with further care instructions.

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After Drains are Removed

Dr. Tran will recommend types of sport bras to be worn after surgery once the drains are removed. The purpose of wearing the bra is to help shape and mold the breasts and keep the implants in the correct position. (Think “down and in.”)

Over the course of 6-12 weeks after surgery, your implants will begin to settle. The fullness you see right after surgery in the upper part of the breast will diminish, and the volume of your breasts will be centrally located so that your nipple/areolar complex will lie in the correct position. This is a gradual process.

Activity Level

You can return to driving when you are off prescription pain medication. Over-the-counter pain medications will not impair your ability to drive. Make sure you’re able to safely maneuver the car before driving.

You may sleep on your side after 2 weeks or when it is comfortable for you. Avoid engaging your pectoralis muscles. This means no heavy lifting, pushing, or pulling anything over 5 lbs. NO chest exercises such as push-ups, and avoiding vigorous upper body exercise until Dr. Tran gives you clearance – typically at 8-12 weeks after surgery. At 4 weeks from surgery, it is OK to lift 10 lbs. if necessary. You may walk, run, lower body strength training after 2 weeks of surgery if desired (again, avoid upper body strength maneuvers). Work up to your normal routine slowly and listen to your body – if an activity is sore or painful, back off.

At week 12 post-surgery, you may begin to engage in pectoralis related exercises. You may feel weakness in your upper body strength as you start. This is normal and will improve with time.

Massage

It’s normal to feel the pectoralis muscle spasm or have shuddering pains in your breast. This indicates that the nerves to the muscle are repairing themselves. Begin gentle breast massage at 2 weeks after surgery. Small circles with gentle pressure (the weight of a nickel) over the entire breast using any type of lotion will help the swelling resolve. Massaging your actual incision will help soften the scar. You may also use silicone scar sheets (sold at most drug stores) to help the scar soften and fade.

Recovery

Return of touch sensation to the breast and nipple varies. It may take months to years, and may never fully return along your actual incisions or within the nipple itself. The breast itself usually regains sensation within 1 year.

Your scars will fade with time. These scars typically take 1 year to fully form, flatten, and become lighter in color.

Possible Problems/Emergency

If you develop any symptoms such as fevers with temperature greater than 101.5 F, chills, persistent nausea and vomiting, inability to urinate, severe pain not controlled with medications, pus drainage from the wound site, or for any acute problems or illnesses, please contact our office at 714-839-8000 between the hours of 9AM-6:00PM on Monday-Thursday and 9AM-1PM on Friday; or you may reach us at 714-860-3588 after hours.

If you are unable to reach your surgeon or a member of his staff, go to the Emergency Room closest to you.

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References:
New York Group for Plastic Surgery. (2020). Post op care: Breast reconstruction post-op recovery expectations. Retrieved from https://www.nygplasticsurgery.com/patient-resources/post-op-care/breast-reconstruction-post-op-recovery-expectations/

JP Drain Log

Date & Site	8am	2pm	9pm	Total

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