

## **Surgical Services of Athens**

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### **Breast Surgery Post-Operative Instructions**

- A post-operative visit has been arranged as noted in your paperwork. You may call the office during business hours to verify your post-operative visit date and time if needed. Office hours are 8am-12pm and 2pm-5pm Monday through Thursday and 8am-12pm on Friday. An on-call physician is available at all times for emergencies; however, we ask that you call during business hours for non-emergent and routine questions.
- Your incisions will often be closed with a running suture which will be easily removed in the office. If this is your closure method, you may notice a loop of blue suture at the edge of the incision(s). Please do not remove or cut this suture. Steri-strips will likely be placed across the incision(s) and are often placed to hold the suture loops against the skin. You may remove your outer dressings after 24 hours, but do not remove the Steri-strips. You may then shower after removing the outer dressings, but we recommend keeping your back to the shower head initially. The Steri-strips are water resistant.
- Your incisions may be closed with staples. If present, there will either be a gauze dressing or a PICO Vac battery powered dressing covering the staples. If you have a standard gauze or band-aid type dressing, it may be removed 24 hours after your surgery unless otherwise instructed, and you may shower after removal of the outer dressing. Pat the incision dry after showering. The outer dressing may be replaced with a similar dry gauze dressing as needed for protection of the underlying staples.
- If you have a PICO vac battery powered dressing, do not remove the dressing from the skin. It will be easily removed in the office in approximately one week or less. You may shower after 24 hours as the dressing is water resistant, but the battery pack should be removed and kept dry. Simply press the on/off button and disconnect the battery pack with a twist at the tubing connection. After showering, pat the dressing dry, reconnect the battery pack and again press the on/off button. You should see an intermittently blinking green "OK" light when the device is properly functioning. It may take approximately 30 seconds to create a seal prior to blinking green.
- You may have drains presents after breast surgery. Please strip the tubing, empty the drains, and record the output amount twice daily as instructed. When showering, please be cautious with the tubing insertion sites. You may wish to cover the insertion sites with a water-resistant dressing such as a Tegaderm or a small water-resistant bandage. This may be replaced as needed. It is normal to leak some watery fluid around the drain site, especially during the first few days after surgery. We recommend that you take a dose of pain medication about 1 hour prior to the office visit if you anticipate drain removal during the visit.
- Driving after surgery is not recommended until prescription pain medication is no longer needed. You may typically drive if narcotic pain medication has not been taken within 24 hours.
- You may have been given a Surgi-bra after surgery. If given, this should be worn day and night until the follow up visit, unless otherwise directed. It may be taken off for showering.
- If you have had a mastectomy, you may be wrapped in a roll gauze and an overlying Ace (or elastic) bandage. This bandage should be worn day and night, unless otherwise directed. It may be removed and replaced for brief showering as instructed. The bandage should be snug to prevent fluid accumulation, but it should not be too tight or make it difficult to take a breath. It may be rewrapped or adjusted if too tight or too loose.
- Prescription pain medication may cause nausea and will often cause constipation. Do not take Tylenol (acetaminophen) within 4 hours of taking a narcotic pain medication.

- The on-call physician will not be able to provide narcotic pain medication. By law, narcotic pain medication cannot be called in to a pharmacy.
- If present, axillary incisions may cause more discomfort than the breast incisions, especially with arm movement. This is normal. It is also not uncommon to have patches of numbness at the lateral chest or arm after a mastectomy or axillary surgery. This will often subside over time.
- It is important to avoid strenuous activity or heavy lifting after a mastectomy until instructed.
- Some redness around surgical incisions is expected and does not require antibiotics; however, if the redness significantly expands in size or if a surgical site becomes increasingly tender, please call for further instruction. Notify us for fever over 101, or go to the nearest ER immediately for significant shortness of breath.