

Important Information After DIEP Surgery



Important Information

- Take 81mg of aspirin for one month following surgery, unless you have been advised differently.
- If you develop any significant redness, swelling, fever, chills or have any changes to flap appearance since surgery, call the clinic at 407-821-3555.
- During surgery, your surgeon will place a “Prevena” over your abdominal incision. The purpose of the device is to decrease the risk for a fluid collection behind the incision and help prevent the incision from opening. Please see the Prevena Therapy Alert Guide for information on this device.

How long is recovery?

Typically, it will be six to eight weeks before you will be able to resume most normal activities. You will be sore for three to four weeks, improving each week.

Will I have drains in place?

Yes, you will have Jackson-Pratt (JP) drains. There will be a least one drain for each DIEP breast flap and one on each side of the abdominal incision. You will need to empty and record the drainage at least twice daily — more frequently if you are having a lot of drainage. We typically remove the drains after you have less than 20 ml of drainage daily, for three days in a row. But, removal also depends on the quality of the drainage and incisions. After your drains are removed from your abdomen, please begin wearing your compression shorts, ensuring the elastic band does not rest over the incision at your belly or belly button.

How long do I have to use a walker, or how long will I be hunched over?

- A rolling walker needs to be used for three weeks following surgery, and it is important to walk “hunched over” in a flexed-forward position and sleep in a flexed position on your back. This commonly causes back discomfort. Please take your muscle relaxant as prescribed. You may use a heating pad on your back, but ensure it is not applied to your DIEP flap or incisions.
- After three weeks, you can gradually begin to stand upright, as tolerated. However, you must still sleep in a flexed position for a total of eight weeks. You may want to consider the use of a lift chair to allow you more independence in standing from a seated position. You can begin to resume gentle range-of-motion, but avoid hyperextension or quick, jerky movements with upper extremities.
- Please be sure you have an appointment to see your physical or occupational therapist between three and four weeks after surgery.

When can I exercise?

- For the first six weeks, no lifting, pushing or pulling over 10 pounds.
- No exercise until after six weeks and your incisions are completely healed.
- Following surgery, you are encouraged to walk short distances frequently to facilitate your recovery and prevent blood clot formation.

When can I shower?

Typically, patients are allowed to shower three days after surgery. You will need assistance. The Prevena dressing on your belly is water-resistant. You are able to shower with it in place, but avoid direct water spray. We recommend the use of a shower chair or bench when you are at home.

When can I drive?

We recommend you do not drive for three to four weeks or if you are taking opioid pain medications. Do not drive unless you are feeling comfortable enough to drive.

When can I start wearing a bra?

This will vary for each person. Typically, you are asked to not wear a bra until at least four weeks after surgery. When you do wear a bra, it should be soft cotton and have a front closure and no underwire.

*Note: ALL information is subject to modification by your surgeon.
V. 1 March 2023*

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ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al número siguiente 407-303-3025.

ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele nimewo ki anba an 407-303-3025.

