



Dr. Jeannie Shen, FACS

Frequently Asked Questions

LUMPECTOMY and SENTINEL NODE BIOPSY, possible AXILLARY NODE DISSECTION

❖ ***Will I go home with any prescriptions?***

A: Yes, you will go home a prescription for a pain medication. Antibiotics are not routinely prescribed or necessary. You can ask for the prescription prior to surgery if you wish to fill it ahead of time.

❖ ***Do I have any dietary restrictions?***

A. No, but nausea is common immediately after breast surgery, so start your diet slowly with clear liquids and advance to your regular diet when you are ready.

❖ ***When can I shower?***

A. You can start on post-operative day 2 (ex: surgery on Monday, shower on Wednesday). Leave the steri-strips (surgical tape) on the incisions. Remove the gauze around the axillary drain (if there is one) and simply let the soap and water rinse over the breast and pat it dry.

❖ ***When can I wear a bra?***

A. Immediately after surgery. We recommend something more snug, like a sports bra. A front-opening sports bra may be more convenient, and can be found at any major department store. Try to wear your bra as much as possible during the first week after surgery. This minimizes swelling and provides much more comfort and support.

❖ ***What are my activity restrictions?***

- A. Sentinel node biopsy only – since only a few lymph nodes are removed, no drainage tube is left in place. However, with vigorous activity, fluid will collect in the area (seroma). In order to avoid this, we suggest you avoid lifting anything over 10 pounds, and avoid heavy household work, such as vacuuming, heavy cooking or cleaning, laundry, groceries, etc. Avoid running the couple of weeks. Walking is the best activity immediately after surgery.
- B. Axillary node dissection – a drainage tube will be left in place, and will be ready to be removed once the output is less than 30 mL/24 hours for 2 consecutive days. Until then, keep the arm activity light. This will allow the area to heal and the drainage output to reduce so that we can remove it. Again, avoid lifting anything over 10 pounds, and avoid heavy household work, such as vacuuming, heavy cooking or



cleaning, laundry, groceries, etc. Avoid running the first couple of weeks. Walking is the best activity immediately after surgery. On average, the drainage tube stays in 1-2 weeks. Once the drainage tube is removed, Dr. Shen will provide instructions for exercises, and may refer you for physical therapy to help you regain full range of motion. You should ultimately have full use and function of your arm.

❖ ***When can I drive?***

- A. Generally, it is advised that you wait 2 days before driving. You should not drive if you are taking prescription pain medications (Vicodin, Norco, Percocet, Ultram).
- B. If you had an axillary node dissection, it may be uncomfortable to drive with the drainage tube in place, and we would typically recommend waiting until the tube is removed before driving (average 1-2 weeks).

❖ ***What can I take for pain?***

- A. Dr. Shen uses a lot of local anesthesia in surgery, so you should have very little discomfort immediately afterwards. After several hours, the anesthesia will wear off, and you may notice some discomfort of the breast or underarm. You will be prescribed a pain medicine, but can also use over-the-counter extra strength Tylenol or Advil as needed. Up to half of our patients don't need to use the prescription pain medicine.

❖ ***Do I need to change the bandages?***

- A. Sentinel node biopsy only - No. Dr. Shen will take off the surgical tape in the office when you see her post-operatively the week after surgery.
- B. Axillary node dissection – Leave the surgical tape on the incisions until Dr. Shen removes them in her office. On post-operative day 2 (EX: surgery Monday, post-operative day 2 Wednesday), you may remove the gauze around the drainage tube and shower. The gauze does not have to be replaced.

❖ ***What should I look for at home?***

- A. Infections immediately after surgery are rare. Signs of infection: fever over 102, redness spreading over the entire breast. Call Dr. Shen at (626) 356-3167 if you experience any of this.

❖ ***When do I see the doctor?***

- A. You will have an appointment to see Dr. Shen 7-10 days after your surgery. You can make this appointment ahead of time if you wish.