



Dr. Jeannie Shen, FACS

Frequently Asked Questions

TOTAL MASTECTOMY WITH SENTINEL NODE BIOPSY/AXILLARY NODE DISSECTION

Without immediate breast reconstruction

❖ ***How long will I be in the hospital?***

A. Typically, patients are kept overnight for observation and are able to go home the day after surgery, as long as they are tolerating a diet, their pain is controlled on oral pain medications, and they are able to get out of bed and perform the basic activities of daily living with minimal assistance (go to the bathroom, brush their teeth, comb hair, wash face, etc.)

❖ ***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 may 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 we will 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 drain(s) and simply let the soap and water rinse over the chest and pat it dry.

❖ ***When can I wear a bra?***

A. We do not recommend wearing a bra for at least a month after surgery. You can, however, wear a light bralette (camisole with built in shelf). Alternatively, you can buy a post-mastectomy camisole, which is specifically for surgical patients and have pouches for the drains. Dr. Shen can provide a prescription for you pre-operatively or post-operatively.

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

A. With the drainage tubes in place, avoid lifting the arm over 100 degrees. There are some light exercise suggestions available in the Breast Center workbook provided. Immediately after surgery, 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.

- B. Once the drainage tubes are removed, Dr. Shen will provide some exercises for you and may refer you for physical therapy to regain your full range of motion. You should ultimately expect to regain normal use and function of your arm.

❖ ***When can I drive?***

- A. Generally, it is advised that you wait 2 days before driving. Do not drive if you are taking prescription pain medications (Vicodin, Norco, Percocet, Ultram).
- B. 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).

❖ ***How long does the drain stay in?***

- A. The drainage tube will be ready to be removed once the output is less than 30 mL/24 hours for 2 consecutive days. On average, the drainage tube stays in 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 chest area or underarm. We will provide pain medications to you in the hospital, and you will be prescribed a pain medicine upon discharge. You may also use over-the-counter extra strength Tylenol or Advil as needed.

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

- A. 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 get my breast prosthesis?***

A. Once the drainage tube is removed, Dr. Shen will provide you a prescription for the breast prosthesis, and post-mastectomy bra and camisole. Our office will provide you with a list of local places you can go for measuring, fitting, and ordering these. You will want to wait at least 2 weeks after the drains are removed so that some of the swelling has gone down. Most insurance plans will allow us to prescribe two new ones every year, though individual plans differ.

❖ ***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.