



Dr. Jeannie Shen, FACS

Frequently Asked Questions

TOTAL MASTECTOMY WITH SENTINEL NODE BIOPSY/AXILLARY NODE DISSECTION WITH IMMEDIATE BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

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

- A. Tissue expander/implant: 1-2 days
- B. Latissimus dorsi (back muscle) with implant: 2-3 days
- C. Inner thigh free flap (TUG): 3-4 days
- D. Abdominal free flap (TRAM, DIEP, SIEAP): 4-5 days

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

A: Yes, you will go home a prescription for pain medications. Antibiotics are also routinely prescribed if a tissue expander/implant has been placed. In these cases, the antibiotics should be taken until the drainage tubes are removed. You can ask for these prescriptions prior to surgery if you wish to fill them 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. If you wish, we can ask the nurses to help you shower during your hospitalization.

❖ ***When can I wear a bra?***

A. We do not recommend wearing a bra for at least 6 weeks after surgery. You can, however, wear a light bralette (camisole with built in shelf), with the permission of your plastic reconstruction surgeon. Alternatively, you can buy a post-mastectomy camisole, which is specifically designed 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. For the first 6 weeks, we prefer that you avoid lifting your arms over 100 degrees to allow the maximal healing. There are some light exercise suggestions available in the Breast Center workbook provided. Ask Dr. Shen which ones you can do. 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. After the first 6 weeks, 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. We do not recommend driving 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 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. This can be removed either by Dr. Shen or your plastic reconstructive surgeon.

❖ ***What can I take for pain?***

- A. In the hospital, several modalities will be used to prevent and control your post-operative pain, including a peri-operative paravertebral block (placed by the anesthesiologist in surgery), an On-Q pump, and oral and IV pain medications. Upon discharge, you will be prescribed a pain medicine. You may also use over-the-counter extra strength Tylenol or Advil as needed. Constipation is common with narcotic pain medications, so be sure to keep track of your bowel movements. If you become constipated at home, try a stool softener (e.g. Colace), prune juice, Dulcolax suppository. Please contact Dr. Shen if you are having trouble with your bowel movements. She may recommend something stronger.



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

- A. Leave the surgical tape on the incisions until the doctor removes them in his/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 or your plastic reconstructive surgeon if you are unsure or 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 discharge from the hospital. We can try to coordinate this with your plastic reconstruction surgeon if possible. You can make this appointment ahead of time if you wish.