

TISSUE EXPANDER PLACEMENT DURING OR AFTER MASTECTOMY



Procedure:

TISSUE EXPANDER OR PERMANENT IMPLANT PLACEMENT (Breast Reconstruction)

This operation involves using a tissue expander, which is placed under the remaining skin and muscle of the chest following mastectomy. The tissue expander is inserted with a small amount of saline and is gradually inflated with saline over a number of weeks or months to gently stretch the skin and muscle. Once the area has been stretched, another surgery is performed to remove the tissue expander and replace it with a permanent breast implant.

Planning your surgery:

In your initial consultation, your surgeon will evaluate your health and discuss your specific goals for surgery. There are many factors that may affect your results. Please tell your surgeon if you smoke and if you are taking any medications, vitamins, or other drugs.

You should always be honest in your discussion with your surgeon. She will be candid with you when describing your alternatives and limitations of each surgery. Your surgeon will work with you to recommend the procedure that is right for you and to achieve your realistic goals.

Preparing for surgery:

On the night before surgery we require you to **not** eat or drink anything after midnight. Your surgeon will give you specific instructions on preparation, including guidelines on eating and drinking, smoking, and taking or avoiding certain vitamins, and medications. Please do not drink any alcohol 24 hours prior to surgery or while taking narcotic pain medications. If you smoke, plan to quit at least one to two weeks before your surgery and not to resume for at least two weeks after your surgery. We will have you sign a smoking waiver. Avoid overexposure to the sun before and after surgery and do not go on a stringent diet, as both can inhibit your ability to heal. If you develop a cold or infection of any kind, your surgery will probably be postponed.

Whether your surgery is done on an outpatient or inpatient basis, you should arrange for someone to drive you home the day after your surgery, and to help you out for a day or two after you leave the hospital. Also, it is critical to avoid putting any type of warm compresses, hot packs, heating pads or ice over your fresh surgical site. The surgical area will not compensate for heat or cold as normal tissue would and your wound is at high risk for burning, resulting in tissue damage and delayed healing.

Surgery:

Time: A single tissue expander placement with mastectomy usually takes about 2 hours. For both breasts, the time may be roughly doubled.

Anesthesia: General anesthesia is used in the operating room.

Process: Tissue expander placement surgery consists of placing a tissue expander under the remaining chest tissues and muscle following mastectomy. Tissue expander placement can occur immediately following mastectomy or at a later date. The tissue expander is removed at a second stage surgery and the permanent implant is placed. .

Hospitalization: You will need to check into the hospital 2 hours prior to the start of your surgical procedure. For tissue expander placement, insurance companies usually allow for a one-night stay in the hospital. The second staged surgery, where the tissue expander is removed and a permanent implant is placed, is a day surgery and patients normally go home that day following the procedure.

Prescriptions: You will need to get your prescriptions filled prior to surgery. This way they are available to you when you are discharged from the hospital.

Medications prescribed:

- Antibiotic medication
- Pain (narcotic) medication
- Ibuprofen, for after surgery only
- Muscle spasm medication
- Stool softener medication

The Ibuprofen and narcotic medications should be taken in a staggered fashion after surgery in order to give better, long-lasting pain control. The muscle spasm medicine can be used if you have a muscle cramp in your chest. DO NOT take the muscle spasm medication and narcotic at the same time, since it may make you too drowsy.

What to expect Post-Operatively:

Pain Management: Mild or moderate pain will be present for several days. Any discomfort you may feel can be controlled with medications prescribed by your plastic surgeon.

Drains: Small drainage tubes will be placed beneath the skin to help prevent fluids from accumulating. If drain tubes are used, you and those caring for you will be instructed in management of the drain system at the time of hospital discharge. The drains will be removed when there is less fluid drainage from each drain. Depending on the drainage amount, one might be removed first and the second kept in for a little longer.

Exercise: Tenderness will usually persist for several weeks. Bandages applied in surgery will be removed 1-2 days later. Most sutures dissolve. Excessive upper arm movement should be avoided for at least 3-4 weeks, although light arm movement is encouraged. Light exercise or walking will help you feel better. Even people who have never exercised before should begin a light exercise program to reduce swelling and to lower the chance of blood clots.

- Excessive lifting and exercise should be restricted for 4 weeks.
- **No** heavy lifting for 2-4 weeks. (Nothing over a gallon of milk)
- **No** jogging or running for 4 weeks.
- **No** physical contact with breast area for 3-4 weeks.
- We encourage walking to decrease the chance of getting a DVT, (Deep Venous Thrombosis or blood clots in the legs). Airplane flights should be avoided for at least 3 weeks after surgery or blood clots could form in the legs.

Personal Care: Baths and showers should be restricted until after the dressings are removed. Your dressings are usually removed the second day following surgery. You may shower on the second day after surgery, even if your drains are still present. Underneath your dressings are paper tapes, or steri strips. These will remain on for about a week, then you may gently peel them off in the shower. You may want to have someone else assist with hair care for at least several days.

Scarring: Your scars may appear to worsen during for first three to six months as they heal, but this is normal. Expect it to take nine months to a year before your scars flatten out and lighten in color. While they will never disappear completely, they are easily hidden, even under bathing suits.

Follow-up Care: Your plastic surgeon will see you in the hospital the following day after surgery, then weekly for breast expansions. After patients have their permanent implants placed, we prefer to see them weekly, then again at 3, 6 and 9 months following surgery.

Social Activity: Social activities should be limited for approximately 1-3 weeks following surgery, (depending on the activity).

Returning to Work: You may return to non-strenuous work normally within the first two to three weeks, depending on how you feel.

Risks and Possible Side Effects: Blood clots, infection, bruising and poor healing resulting in conspicuous scarring or skin loss are a risk of surgery. Please refer to your consent form as endorsed by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Contacting your surgeon: Please call immediately if you experience shortness of breath, heart issues, or any other concerns. If you can't reach anyone at the office **(503) 699-6464**, please call the answering service phone number, **(503) 238-8369**.

In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Fees: If this is an insurance case, then your insurance company will be contacted to try and obtain preauthorization.

Adapted from The American Society of Plastic Surgeons.
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