

NICHOLAS T. HADDOCK, M.D.

Breast Reconstruction with Tissue Expanders

Patient Care Instructions

General Information

A breast reconstruction with tissue expanders is generally performed immediately after a mastectomy for breast malignancy or a high risk situation. It involves placing a shaped breast tissue expander under the mastectomy skin. Tissue expanders are designed to be firmer and appear larger than a normal breast implant because they need to provide enough support to gradually stretch the overlying breast skin. Tissue expanders in general have a metallic port, which is accessed in the clinic with a magnet and filled through a small catheter. The breast reconstruction is frequently supported with an extra layer of tissue called acellular dermal matrix, which acts to support and secure the tissue expander in place as it expands. The tissue expansion will start in the operating room and then be continued in the clinic by Dr. Haddock and his nursing staff when the initial healing phase is complete. Many patients can go home the same day as surgery but some stay one night in the hospital following a mastectomy.

Things to handle prior to your surgery

Arrange for someone to drive you home from the hospital and stay with you for one to two days.

Follow a well-balanced diet to include protein and limit the amount of salt intake. A high salt diet or meal can lead to increased swelling and prolonged recovery. Protein supplementation can be started one to two weeks before surgery and should include over 20 grams of additional protein daily.

Have electrolyte containing fluids such as Gatorade or electrolyte water on hand.

Have stool softeners/laxatives on hand, such as Colace, Biscodyl, Milk of Magnesia. These can be purchased at your local pharmacy.

Review the attached list of medications not to take during the perioperative period. If you are unsure if you can stop a medication, then please call the prescribing provider to confirm if this is medically safe.

If you have any additional questions that were not addressed during your consultation, then please call Dr. Haddock's nurse at (214) 645-2353. MyChart is also an easy way to contact our office with non-urgent questions and is typically preferred to phone calls.

If you are unsure if you can stop a medication then please call the prescribing provider to confirm if this is medically safe.

For your convenience, we have included a *Suggested Shopping List* as an addendum to these instructions (page 7).

Pre-Operative Guidelines

Smoking should be stopped a minimum of eight weeks prior to surgery. Smoking should be avoided for at least six weeks after surgery as well. Smoking can greatly interfere with healing and lead to postoperative complications. Secondhand smoke is just as bad as a patient smoking themselves.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. This includes no water, gum, or hard candy. Blood pressure and/or heart medications can be taken with a sip of water as directed by your prescribing physician.

If you take medication for diabetes then confirm with your prescribing physician how to manage these medications prior to surgery.

If you are prone to nausea or motion sickness let your anesthesiologist know on the day of surgery. Medications can be started prior to surgery or during surgery to help improve your postoperative experience.

Post-Operative Care

Medication will be prescribed on the day of the operation. This can either be collected at the hospital or sent to your home pharmacy. Take pain medication and muscle relaxers as prescribed. Often these medications are necessary for the first two days and then on an as needed basis. Do not drink alcohol with these medications.

Take a suggested stool softener/laxative until bowels begin to function normally after surgery. A combination of anesthesia, muscle relaxants and pain medications usually make these necessary for a few days.

Do not smoke or be around smoking as even second hand smoke delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

Get plenty of rest. The general anesthesia and pain medication can promote insomnia; therefore, a sleep aid may be taken if needed. Please call Dr. Haddock's nurse at (214) 645-2353 if you feel this would benefit you.

Follow a well-balanced diet, which includes protein and is limited in salt intake. A high salt diet or meal, can lead to increased swelling and prolonged recovery. It is best to continue the protein supplementation for approximately 3 weeks after surgery.

Oral hydration should include the use of electrolyte containing fluids such as Gatorade or a low calorie substitute. Limit the amount of caffeinated beverages as they can promote dehydration; however Dr. Haddock recommends you maintain your daily average of caffeine to avoid headaches.

Activity Restrictions

Avoid laying on your chest or your side.

Walking is encouraged the day of the operation and can be increased over the first two weeks. Light cardiovascular exercise can be resumed after four weeks with all activities to be resumed after six weeks.

You should begin arm exercises (range-of-motion) the day following your surgery. Your arms should not be used to support your body or to lift heavy things. Raising your arms to 90 degrees is encouraged but avoid vigorous movements.

Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 weeks.

Do not drive for approximately one week or when you are no longer taking pain medication. Additionally, your reflexes should be fast enough to be safe. Everyone is different with this restriction as some people are not safe to drive for several weeks.

You may wear a surgical bra, camisole or sports bra, but no underwire bra. Dr. Haddock may tailor this instruction to your individual situation.

In some situations, you will be placed into a surgical bra. If you are placed in a surgical bra then this should be worn as much as possible until you see Dr. Haddock in follow-up.

Post Mastectomy Exercises

Dr. Haddock encourages post mastectomy exercises to assist with your healing after surgery. Doing these exercises will help to minimize internal scarring and encourages movement resulting in overall better comfort while healing. These exercises can begin on the day of discharge from the hospital.

Arm Lift: Standing or sitting erect, while inhaling, slowly raise one or both arms from your sides until straight out at shoulder height. Continue the pose by raising your arms further from shoulder height to over head. The end goal is for your elbows to align with your ears. Exhale slowly while lowering your arms. Repeat this exercise 5 - 10 times every hour as tolerated.

Incision Care

You may have a plastic dressing over your incision. This can remain in place unless it gets wet underneath. If it is wet then it can be removed. Remove if uncomfortable, or if any signs of blistering develop, after the first day

You may have a clear skin glue dressing on incisions.

The glue will protect the incision for approximately three weeks. If it begins to peel off then it is ok to cut the portion peeling away.

Most sutures are dissolvable, but if you have permanent ones, they will be removed at your follow-up visit.

You can get into the shower after discharge from the hospital, but do not allow direct water to hit your breast or your drains. If your dressings become saturated then they need to be removed. Do not allow wet dressings to remain in place.

If given a bra, please wear this at all times. It can be removed before showering. If it is causing concerns then please call the office.

Do not submerge the incisions for at least one month.

Do not use a heating pad; heat may burn the area.

Drain Care

Dr. Haddock will place one or two small silicone tubes under the skin for drainage in the area of surgery. These are connected to a suction bulb and are referred to as drains. The purpose is to collect fluid, which can occur in the area of surgery.

Care for the drains will be reviewed by the nurse on discharge.

Keep your drainage bulbs collapsed to create a mild suction. Record the time and amount of drainage over a 24 hour period. For your convenience, we have included a chart at the end of these instructions on which to record the drain totals.

Generally, the drains will be removed when the individual drain output is 20 cc or less in a 24 hour period. Call the clinic at (214) 645-2353 to make an appointment with Dr. Haddock's nursing team to have these removed.

If the drains have not been removed by two weeks after your operation, call for an appointment.

What to Expect after Tissue Expander Placement

Dr. Haddock does partially fill the tissue expander(s) in the operation. Further expansion will start after approximately two to three weeks when the incisions are healed and your pain is manageable.

It is common to have discomfort of the breast and mild burning around the incision after breast surgery. This is normal and will improve shortly after surgery.

You can expect some slight bloody oozing from the suture lines and swelling of the incisions. Gauze may be reapplied if it is bothersome. However, you should call the clinic if you have continuous bleeding, significantly more swelling on one breast in comparison to the other, or any severe pain associated with swelling.

Tightness of the breasts is a normal feeling after surgery. This may worsen over the first 2 days and will relax with time. The muscle relaxers will help with this.

There may be a feeling of numbness of the breasts. This is normal after a mastectomy. You may regain some sensation but majority of the nerves to the skin are cut as part of a mastectomy.

Constipation is common after any operation, and is secondary to the anesthetic, pain medication and dehydration. Please stay well hydrated and pick up a stool softening and/or laxative as listed on the *[Suggested Shopping List \(page 7\)](#)*.

The most common complications can include bleeding, infection, seroma, and wound healing/mastectomy flap necrosis. When a mastectomy is performed the blood flow to the breast skin is damaged. This can leave skin that is unhealthy and/or create a non-perfect environment for wound healing. If this occurs any of the above complications can result. This is unfortunately a risk with all mastectomies. If there are concerns please let Dr. Haddock's team know and you will be treated expeditiously.

When to Call the Office

If you have increased swelling and bruising on one breast significantly more than the other. Remove the bra to make this determination. Significant variation in size may represent a breast hematoma (collection of blood) or a seroma (collection of clear fluid).

If you have increasing redness or swelling around the incision.

If you develop any openings or wounds.

If you have severe pain not relieved by pain medication.

If you have any side effects from the medication: rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.

If you have fever over 101.

If you have yellow or greenish drainage from an incision or notice a foul odor.

If you notice some vaginal burning and itching as a result of the antibiotics used during and after surgery.

If a drain was placed and the output is less than 20 cc for 24 hours.

When you receive your pathology report and know if you will require chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

For medical questions, please call Dr. Haddock's nursing team at (214) 645-2353

Dr. Haddock will be contacted for any urgent or emergent medical issues.

Follow-up Care and Appointments

It is important to be seen by Dr. Haddock or his nurse when any drain is less than 20 cc for 24 hours. This typically occurs by two weeks. Call Dr. Haddock's nurse to schedule an

appointment when this criteria is met. If you have not met this criteria by two weeks then call for an appointment.

You should schedule your second visit for approximately three weeks after surgery. The expansion process will be initiated at this point. This process will be tailored to your specific needs but can consist of weekly or biweekly appointments. If you are told you will need radiation treatment then we need to expedite expansion so it is completed prior to marking for radiation.

Once any adjuvant treatment plans are made we can discuss and potentially schedule your next surgery.

Call to schedule your appointments at the UT Southwestern Medical Center Plastic Surgery Clinic at (214) 645-2353.

There are two nurse practitioners on Dr. Haddock's team. Jennifer Bell, MSN, APRN, AGACNP-BC, works in the hospital setting and Kristi Elliott, APRN, FNP-C, is in the clinic setting. They may both be involved in your perioperative care.

For any surgical scheduling concerns please call: Lindsay Bolger at (214) 645-3118

For medical questions, please call Dr. Haddock's nursing team at (214) 645-2353 or MyChart out office. MyChart is the preferred way to communicate with the team for non-urgent concerns. These messages are not typically answered after hours.

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Suggested Shopping List

Items to have on hand prior to surgery

Tissue Expanders Exchange

Visit <https://www.drnicholashaddock.com/supplies/> for links to purchase some of below.

- Prescriptions will be called into your local pharmacy as ordered by Dr. Haddock. Typical medications are as follows but these will be tailored to your needs.
 - Tylenol #3 or Tramadol (pain medication)
 - Valium (muscle relaxant and anti-anxiety medication)
 - Keflex (Antibiotic)

- Ibuprofen (Motrin)

- Sports bra or Camisole

- Gatorade or another low calorie alternative, such as water with electrolytes

- Protein Supplements

- Stool softener / laxative (choose one):
 - Docusate (Colace) 100 mg orally two to three times daily when taking pain medication
 - Milk of Magnesia 30cc/1 Tablespoon twice daily when taking pain medication
 - Prune juice or Sorbitol orally
 - Biscodyl or Magnesium Citrate as needed for constipation

- Arnica montana and Bellis perennis can be taken to help with drain outputs, bruising, and swelling