

Axillary Lymph Node Removal
(in conjunction with partial or total mastectomy)

While recovering from your surgery, please observe the following instructions:

1. Advance your diet slowly as tolerated. Drink plenty of fluids; at least six to eight 8oz glasses of water per day.
2. Take your pain medication as prescribed. You may also use ibuprofen 400-600mg every 8 hours in addition to your prescribed medication if you do not have a history of ulcers or sensitivity to anti-inflammatory medications. **DO NOT** drive while on narcotic pain medication.
3. Apply an **ice pack** to the operative site of the breast if you had a lumpectomy (partial mastectomy) 20 minutes on/ 20 minutes off for the first 24-48 hours after surgery.
4. Narcotic pain medications can be very constipating.
 - a. Use a stool softener such as **Pericolace** or **Senokot** one to two times per day. They are available over the counter.
 - b. Once off narcotic pain medications, you may want to switch to **Citrucel** or **Benefiber**, 1-2 tbsp in 8 oz of juice or water one to two times per day.
 - c. If you are off narcotic pain medications and start to have loose bowel movements, you may discontinue the Pericolace, Senokot, Citrucel or Benefiber if you're taking them.
5. If a drain was left in during your surgery, empty the small bulb attached to your **drain** twice daily and record the output. The drain will be ready to remove when the output is less than 30ml per day for 2 days. Call our office when this threshold is met and we will have you come in for drain removal. Some fluid may leak around the drain—this is messy, but not dangerous. This usually means the drain is clogging and needs to be “stripped” to promote drainage.
6. You may remove the dressing over the breast and axillary incisions within 48 hours after surgery and take a shower. Replace the dressing around the drain exit site. **Do not** leave a wet dressing on—it will promote infection. You may keep the dressing on until your first post-operative visit and take sponge baths as long as the dressing stays dry.
7. Limit activity on the operative side to no lifting, pushing or pulling. Do not raise the arm more than 90 degrees. Exercises can generally begin within 48 hours after the drain is removed. We will instruct you in these or refer you to Physical Therapy when the drain is removed.
8. Please call our office if you experience fevers, chills, painful enlarging swelling around incisions, redness or streaking around incisions, or persistent bleeding.
9. If you haven't yet scheduled your post-operative appointment, please contact our office to arrange one for 7–10 days after your surgery. Your final pathology report will usually be available for review at that time.