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DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER BREAST RECONSTRUCTION WITH TISSUE EXPANDERS OR AFTER SECOND STAGE RECONSTRUCTION WITH IMPLANTS

- You may shower the day the drains have been removed. The stitches can get wet; just pat them dry. Use an antibacterial soap for two weeks.

- You may drive when you are no longer taking pain medication and feel comfortable enough to do so.

- In the first few weeks after surgery, listen to your body. If you are tired, then rest; if your arm hurts, then protect it somewhat. Let me know if your arm movement is still limited at 3 weeks.

- Do not do any **strenuous** arm exercises until about 2 weeks after surgery. However, within a few days of surgery, you must gently begin doing your range of motion exercises. Follow the Reach-to-Recovery exercises until you have reliable, good range of motion. I also have instructions for range of motion on the website and in the office.

- Please call me at the office **immediately** if your breast reconstruction skin starts to turn red, warm, tender or otherwise shows signs of infection. If an infection is not treated immediately, you can lose your implant. I don't mind if you call in the evening or on weekends for this. It is that important.

- **DO NOT** use a heating pad on any surgical area until cleared by Dr. Blanchet. The skin is very delicate, and your sensation is altered in these areas. You can develop a burn with permanent scarring from a simple heating pad.

- Most patients will have some fat grafting done at the time of their second stage reconstruction. Please wear a gentle compression garment. Stop the compression whenever you feel it is no longer needed – on average, one to three weeks. The area that was liposuctioned will often have a few hard areas for a few weeks where you have some bruising in the fat. These initially feel like "knots" and always resolve with time.

- Please do not take your medications on an empty stomach. In addition, be aware that all narcotic pain medications can cause constipation or nausea. The use of over-the-counter laxatives or stool softeners (Colace) is recommended post-op while taking prescriptive pain medicines.

- Please avoid aspirin-related substances or any of the medications listed on your pre-op sheet for 2 weeks after your surgery as this will increase your risk of bruising and poor healing.

- The best way for you to heal faster and feel better sooner is to walk every day as soon as you are able. You can rest afterwards, but walking will keep you from losing muscle mass, prevent clots in your legs and bring your energy level back sooner. I will restrict you from aerobic exercise, but walking is advised.

- You can do lower body exercises after 2 weeks, but no aerobic exercise for 3 weeks to a month.

- If you have steri-strips, please leave these on until they are dangling by a thread. If you have dermabond glue, then do not apply any ointments as this will dissolve the glue prematurely. Please do not apply any creams or lotions on the incisions until cleared by the doctor.

- As long as you have a drain in, you should be on antibiotics. If you run out of antibiotics and your drain is still in, please call the office for a refill. **Please stop taking your antibiotics once your drain(s) have been removed.**

- You may find when you get home that you will have gained weight after surgery. This is simply from IV fluids and resolves in about 2 weeks.

- **Do not smoke for at least a month before and after surgery or you may have major wound-healing problems which can lead to the loss of your implant.**

- For two years after you have had an implant placed, you will need to take antibiotics just prior to dental work to prevent infection. We can call these into your pharmacy for you.

- Please remember that although the majority of infections are immediately post-op, delayed infections are possible, especially in irradiated breast reconstructions. You need to look at your breasts every day. Call me if your breasts develop redness, firmness or definite warmth.

PLEASE FEEL COMFORTABLE TO CALL OUR OFFICE IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS. AFTER HOURS OR ON WEEKENDS, YOU CAN REACH THE DOCTOR BY CALLING 804-320-8545. IN A TRUE EMERGENCY, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.