

Breast surgery: Preparing for recovery

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BREAST CANCER®

Try these tips from our breast cancer community and trusted experts to make your recovery at home more comfortable.

CHOOSE A RECOVERY AREA

- Pick a comfortable spot for your recovery that is pleasant, near sunlight and where a caregiver can be nearby. If you have stairs in your home, keep in mind that you may not be able to go up and down easily to reach a bathroom or kitchen.
- Get a comfortable chair with a supportive back and arms. These are easier to get in and out of. Many people find a recliner helpful for changing positions and sleeping upright. Some electric models also help lift you to standing.
- If you choose to sleep in bed, a wedge pillow can help you sleep comfortably while partially upright.
- Have a lap or TV tray handy so you can eat or do other activities from your chair. Position a table you can reach from your chair for items you need throughout the day. Self-care activities are encouraged like washing your face, brushing your teeth, light housekeeping, and meal preparation.

STOCK UP ON SUPPLIES

- Buy any over-the-counter medicines your doctor recommends ahead of time and keep them near your recovery space. Ask a helper to pick up your prescriptions and bring them to you. Set timers for your medications to stay ahead of pain and discomfort.
- Ask your nurse what kind of surgical dressings you need to keep at home to prevent infection and reduce scarring. Some hospitals may give you what you need for the first few days. Consider stocking gauze pads or self-adhesive maxi-pads, which stay put inside clothing, as well as scar-minimizing silicone strips.



SMART IDEAS

- Choose a supportive front-close bra and button or zipper tops so that you can access drains and surgical sites easily.
- Try different ways to hold surgical drains while you move and shower. Some people find a lanyard, clothing with drain pouches, or a fanny pack can help keep drains secure.
- Give yourself time to rest and heal. Lean on helpers to do things like laundry, grocery shopping and cooking.
- After surgery, engage in light exercises to maintain arm and shoulder mobility. Follow activity instructions from your medical team.
- To help prevent blood clots after surgery you need to get out of your bed or chair at least every 2 hours when awake. You may need help at first!