

A **mastectomy** is surgery to remove the breast tissue. Most of the time, a **mastectomy** is done to treat cancer. In a modified radical mastectomy, the Surgeon removes the entire breast tissue along with some of the lymph nodes underneath the arm. In some cases, only a few lymph nodes are removed. This is called a **sentinel node biopsy**. Your Surgeon will review this with you when discussing your surgical options.

If a **sentinel node biopsy** is performed, you will have an appointment in Sudbury the day prior in order to inject the lymph nodes. Your **mastectomy** surgery will be booked for the following day at St. Joseph's General Hospital.

You will require blood tests before the surgery. You may also require ultrasound and possibly a consultation with the Anaesthetist. You may have to go to Sudbury HSN for appointments before the surgery.

DAY OF SURGERY

You will stay at least one day in the hospital after your surgery. Your Surgeon may prescribe pain medicine and blood thinners to prevent blood clots.

Please review: *General Surgery Information Sheet.*

PREPARING FOR YOUR SURGERY

The Nurse assigned to your care will prepare you for your surgery.

You will:

- change into a hospital gown,
- have an IV inserted,
- have your height, weight and vital signs taken,
- have additional blood tests done if required,
- be asked general health questions for your admission to Hospital.

WHEN IT IS TIME FOR YOUR SURGERY

- A Nurse will escort you to the Operating Room.
- You will speak with your Surgeon, Anaesthetist and Operating Room staff and have an opportunity to ask questions prior to your surgery.

SURGERY

This surgery is performed under **general anaesthesia**. Your Anaesthetist will discuss this with you and review options for managing your pain after the surgery.

- You may have a drainage tube inserted into your incision to collect fluid that builds up after surgery. This tube will be connected to a suction bulb drain on the outside of your body to remove the fluid.
- Your incision or incisions will be closed with stitches (sutures).
- A bandage (dressing) will be placed over your breast area. If lymph nodes were removed, a dressing will also be placed under your arm.

AFTER SURGERY

- You will be taken to the recovery room where a Nurse will monitor your vital signs and ensure your pain and nausea are managed with medication.
- Once you are fully awake from the anaesthetic, you are then ready to return to your room. You will be taken by stretcher to the medical unit where you will be monitored and provided something to drink.
- You will begin a gradual return to your usual diet.
- You may have a drainage tube in place for 5 days. You will be given instructions about caring for the drain before you go home.
- You will have a large dressing which is removed the third day after surgery; this may be done if you are at home on the third day.
- You will be given a mastectomy binder and that is to be worn throughout your hospitalization and a good supportive bra thereafter, day and night 24 hours per day.

EXERCISE INSTRUCTIONS

During recovery, it is necessary to perform exercises that will help after having an anaesthetic and prevent blood clots.

- To clear your lungs of mucous, take a deep breath in and breathe out slowly – 5 times.
- To keep the blood moving in your legs and help prevent blood clots in your veins:
 - do ankle circling, each direction and move toes up and down– 10 times,
 - tighten knees and relax – 10 times,
 - tighten both buttocks and relax – 10 times,
 - bend one knee, relax and then bend the other, relax – 10 times.
- As instructed by the Physiotherapist or Nurse, use your incentive spirometer for deep breathing and use your pillow on your abdomen for coughing.

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

- Expect some bruising around the incision.
- The dressing is removed on the third day after surgery. If you feel up to it, you can shower, pat the tapes (steristrips) dry.
- You may have tapes (steristrips) covering incision. These will fall off or can be removed after 10 days.
- You will have a follow up appointment with your Surgeon 10 – 12 days postop.
- Maintain arm mobility.
- Do not lift anything that would make you strain.
- See instructions: [Pain Management After Surgery](#).

Do not hesitate to come into the Emergency Room if you experience any of the following:

- fever over 38°C or 99.5°F,
- increased pain, redness, swelling, smelly discharge or bleeding from the area,
- chest pain associated with increased pain when taking a deep breath,
- sudden pain or swelling in the calf of your leg,
- pain that is not relieved by your pain medications,
- any other unusual changes which are of concern to you.