

Mastectomy

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

What do I need to know about a mastectomy? A mastectomy is surgery to remove all or part of your breast. Tissue, lymph nodes, or muscle near the breast may also be removed. A mastectomy is done to treat breast cancer and prevent cancer from spreading. A mastectomy can also be done to prevent breast cancer. This may be a choice if you are at high risk for breast cancer. The type of mastectomy you need may depend on the size of the tumor. It may also depend on if the cancer has spread.

How do I prepare for a mastectomy? Your healthcare provider will talk to you about how to prepare for surgery. He may tell you not to eat or drink anything after midnight on the day of your surgery. He will tell you what medicines to take or not take on the day of your surgery. You may need to stop taking aspirin or blood thinners several days before surgery. Arrange for someone to drive you home and stay with you after surgery. This person can help care for you and watch for complications from surgery.

What will happen during a mastectomy?

- You will be given general anesthesia to keep you asleep and free from pain during surgery. You may be given an antibiotic through your IV to help prevent a bacterial infection. Your healthcare provider will make an incision over your breast. He will remove the tumor and breast tissue. He may also remove muscle from behind your breast. If lymph nodes will be taken, a small incision will be made in your armpit. The lymph nodes will be removed and tested for cancer.
- One or more drains may be inserted near your incision. A drain removes extra fluid and helps your incision heal. Your healthcare provider will close your incision with stitches and cover it with a bandage. He may also wrap a tight-fitting bandage around both of your breasts. This may decrease swelling, bleeding, and pain.

What will happen after a mastectomy? Healthcare providers will monitor you until you are awake. You may need to spend 1 to 2 nights in the hospital. You may have difficulty moving your arm closest to your mastectomy. This should get better in a few days. Get out of bed and walk when your healthcare provider says it is safe. This will help prevent blood clots.

What are the risks of a mastectomy? You may bleed more than expected or get an infection. Nerves, blood vessels, and muscles may be damaged during your surgery. Blood or fluid may collect under your skin. You may need other procedures to remove the fluid or blood. You may have swelling in your arm closest to the mastectomy or where lymph nodes were removed. This swelling is called lymphedema. Lymphedema may cause tingling, numbness, stiffness, and weakness in your arm. This may be permanent. You may get a blood clot in your arm or leg. The blood clot may travel to your heart, lungs, or brain. This may become life-threatening.

CARE AGREEMENT:

You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss treatment options with your healthcare providers to decide what care you want to receive. You always have the right to refuse treatment. The above information is an educational aid only. It is not intended as medical advice for individual conditions or treatments. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before following any medical regimen to see if it is safe and effective for you.

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