

**BREAST RECONSTRUCTION WITH TISSUE EXPANDERS
AFTER CARE INSTRUCTIONS**

1. After surgery, it is important to have someone available to stay with you for the first 24-48 hours. You will be weak and drowsy and may require help the first few times you get out of bed.
2. After surgery it is best to go to bed with your head and shoulders elevated on at least 2 firm pillows (about 30 degrees). While in bed during your recovery, lie on your back, keep your head elevated and your knees slightly flexed.
3. It is important to get out of bed (with assistance) as early and often as possible after your surgery to prevent postoperative problems. While the goal is to move about, even getting out of bed and into a chair will be beneficial. Please take frequent deep breaths to keep your lungs clear (15-20 per hour).
4. A light diet is best after surgery. Begin by taking liquids slowly and progress to soups or Jell-O. You may start a regular diet the next day.
5. Please take the pain medication as directed for the first 2-3 days after surgery. It is not uncommon for you to need it every 3-4 hours. Take it with crackers, Jell-O, etc. After this time, take the pain medication only if you have pain. If the prescription pain medication is too strong for your pain needs, over the counter ibuprofen (400-800 mg every 6-8 hours) can be substituted. In addition, you may be given an anti-anxiety/muscle relaxant medication that you may take as well to prevent aggravation of the pain cycle.
6. For the first 48 hours keep your arm movements to a minimum. Your arms should not be used to support your body or lift anything heavy. Do not push with your arms to lift yourself in bed.
7. Frequently, small drains are used to draw off any accumulating fluid after surgery. The bulb should be kept collapsed at all times. The fluid will need to be removed from the bulb every 3 hours. Please keep a record of the time and how much fluid is emptied from the bulb. Bring this record with you to the follow-up office appointment. Usually drains are removed within the first week after surgery. The drains will not be removed if you have drained more than 25 cc within a 24-hour period.
8. You may have a clear skin glue dressing (Dermabond) or steri-strip bandages over your incision. These will protect the incision for 7-10 days. Let the dressing dissolve or fall off naturally. Do not peel the dressing off as it may delay wound healing and cause excessive scarring.
9. You can shower with either the Dermabond or steri-strips on starting 24 hours (1 day) after surgery. Use a mild perfume/dye free soap and gently cleanse around the incision lines letting the soapy water run over the incisions. Do not submerge the incisions under water. Gently pat the incisions dry.

10. If you have external sutures, they will be removed in 7-10 days and you will wear steri-strips for 3-4 weeks (Dr. Beck's office will provide the steri-strips). You can shower with the strips on.

11. **DO NOT SMOKE** or ingest any nicotine containing products (gum, e-cigarettes, etc.). This is very important for optimal wound healing.

12. You may wear the surgical bra, a loose fitting sports-bra or no bra after surgery. Dr. Beck will advise you when you may wear an underwire bra (usually 6 weeks after surgery).

13. You may gradually resume normal daily activities after 48 hours being careful to avoid any activity that causes pain or discomfort. Strenuous activities and exercises are to be avoided until 3 weeks after surgery. During this recovery period your heart rate should stay below 100 beats per minute and grand sweeping movements of your arms avoided.

14. Prolonged soaking of the incision sites in a bathtub, hot tub, swimming pool or other body of water should be avoided for 4 weeks to allow proper healing to occur.

15. Driving may be resumed when a sharp turn of the steering wheel will not cause pain; this is usually within 5-7 days.

16. All incisions will be extremely sensitive to sunlight during the healing phase. Direct sun contact or tanning booths are to be avoided. Use of a clinical grade sunscreen with SPF 30 and zinc oxide (UVA and UVB protection) is recommended for at least 6 months.

17. Beginning at 3 weeks after surgery, apply a scar cream to the incisions to maximize wound healing. Use the cream for 6 months after surgery. The addition of a hydrating cream and vitamin cream will promote early softening and maturation of these areas.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

1. Sensations like numbness, sharpness, and burning are common during the healing process. These sensations may last several weeks and will gradually disappear.

2. Bruising and swelling are normal for 2-3 weeks. It will disappear over time.

3. You may initially feel like your expanders are not in the correct position. This will resolve as the expanders are filled over the next few months.

EXPANSION

1. Once the drains are removed, the breast skin appears healthy, and the incisions healed (approximately 3-4 weeks after surgery) you will begin your expansions.

2. If additional intervention is necessary after tissue expander placement:

- Expansion will continue through chemotherapy
- Expansion will wait until the conclusion of radiation therapy

3. Visits for expansion are generally every 2-3 weeks. At each visit, the expander port will be located and saline will be injected using a small needle. Commonly, the area is numb and you will not feel the needle stick.

4. The volume placed at each visit and total number of visits depends on how easily your breast tissue accepts the added volume and how large you desire to be.
5. A sensation of stretching or pressure is normal after expansion as the skin adapts to the new volume. This sensation only lasts for a few days and can be temporally alleviated with over the counter acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil)
6. In certain cases, radiation changes or other skin issues may restrict your ability to continue with expansion. Dr. Beck will discuss the options with you if limitations arise in your specific case.

Please note:

- **If you have nausea, vomiting, rash, shortness of breath, or diarrhea after taking your medications, please call our office.**
- **If you develop a fever (oral temperature greater than 100°), redness and/or increased pain at the surgical incision sites, please call Dr. Beck immediately.**
- **If you have major dental work or major surgery, please notify Dr. Beck so he can prescribe a pre-operative medication to protect your implants from possible infection.**

FOLLOW-UP INSTRUCTIONS

After your initial post-op checks, Dr. Beck will see you at regular intervals for filling of your tissue expanders. These follow-ups generally occur at two to three week intervals, however the exact timing will depend on your specific needs. For your convenience you may schedule your appointments at either our Southlake or Dallas office (see below). To schedule your appointment please call us at 214-818-4751 between the hours of 8:30 am – 5:00 pm at least 1 week prior to your desired date.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL DR. BECK

If you need immediate care, please call Dr. Beck anytime on his cell. There is no such thing as a minor question. I would rather you call me than wonder and not do the right thing, so please call my office, or email me anytime.

Dr. Beck's cell: given at time of surgery

Dr. Beck's office: 214-818-4751

Dr. Beck's email: drbeck@dpsi.org

Dallas Plastic Surgery Institute- Southlake
1601 Lancaster Drive, Suite 100
Grapevine, TX 76051
214-818-4751

Dallas Plastic Surgery Institute- Dallas
9101 N. Central Expressway, Suite 600
Dallas, TX 75231
214-818-4751