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**Dallas Plastic Surgery Institute**  
**www.beckplasticsurgery.com**

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

1. After surgery, you will be closely monitored in the hospital for 5-7 days. The first few days will be in the Intensive Care Unit with close monitoring of the blood flow to the transplanted tissue flaps. Keep in mind visiting hours for the ICU are more restricted than normal hospital visiting hours.
2. After discharge home, 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.
3. 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. This is especially important because the tissue for breast reconstruction was taken from your abdomen. It is important to stay flexed at the waist to keep tension off the incision line and abdominal repair. Do not cross your legs, as this increases the risk for blood clots.
4. It is important to get out of bed (with assistance) as early and often as possible after your surgery to prevent postoperative problems. Walk in a stooped position (bent at the hips/waist) for the first week. This takes tension off the suture line and improves the quality of the final scar. 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).
5. A light diet is best after surgery. Your nurse will begin by offering liquids and progressing to soups or Jell-O. You may start a regular diet the next day if you feel ready. Over the next 6 weeks, a high protein diet will benefit your recovery. Daily protein supplementation with pre-made shakes (eg. Boost, Muscle Milk) or soluble powder (whey, soy etc.) from a nutrition store is recommended.
6. While in the hospital your pain will be controlled with scheduled IV and oral pain medication. After hospital discharge, please take the pain medication at regular intervals for the first 2-3 days. 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.
7. For the first week 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.

8. 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 7-14 days after surgery. The drains will not be removed if you have drained more than 30 cc within a 24-hour period.

9. You will have a steri-strip dressing over your incision. This will protect the incision for 10-14 days. You can shower with the strips on starting 48 hours (2 days) after surgery. Use a mild perfume/dye free soap and gently cleanse around the incision lines. Let the dressing fall off naturally. Do not peel this dressing off as it may delay wound healing and cause excessive scarring.

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

11. **DO NOT SMOKE** or ingest any nicotine containing products. This is very important for optimal wound healing.

12. To avoid compressing blood flow to the transplanted tissue flaps, do not wear a bra of any type after surgery. Dr. Beck will advise you when you may wear a loose sports bra (usually 4-6 weeks after surgery) more form fitting and/or underwire bra (usually 8 weeks after surgery).

13. Since tissue was taken from your abdomen, you will have an abdominal binder in place after surgery. This binder needs to be worn around the clock (except when showering) until cleared by Dr. Beck (usually 3-4 weeks).

14. You may gradually resume normal daily activities 48 hours after hospital discharge being careful to avoid any activity that causes pain or discomfort. Strenuous activities and exercises are to be avoided until 6 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.

15. Prolonged soaking of the incision sites in a bathtub, hot tub, swimming pool or other body of water should be avoided for 6 weeks to allow proper healing to occur.

16. Driving may be resumed when a sharp turn of the steering wheel will not cause pain; this is usually within 14-21 days.

17. 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.

18. 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 breasts are too high, too flat, asymmetric or not the correct size. This will resolve over the first 4-6 weeks post operatively as swelling resolves and tissue settles.

### **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.**

## **FOLLOW-UP INSTRUCTIONS**

It is important to be seen by Dr. Beck after your initial post-op checks. He will see you for follow-up appointments at 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 6 months and 1-year post-op. 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](mailto:drbeck@dpsi.org)

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