

Mastectomy

Your surgeon has recommended that the problem in your breast is best treated by removing your breast and possibly some of the lymph glands from under your arm. Mastectomy is usually recommended for one of the following reasons:

- there is a scattering of pre-cancerous changes DCIS throughout the breast. (Your lymph glands will not need to be removed in this condition).
- the cancer is occurring in more than one area of the breast
- the cancer is large in relation to the overall size of the breast
- the cancer is under the nipple, requiring the centre of the breast to be removed
- the histology (laboratory) report of previous surgery showed cancer cells at the outer edge of the sample
- you have chosen to have a mastectomy.

Your surgeon will discuss the possibility of breast reconstruction with you. This may be done during the same operation or at a later date. A further appointment will be needed to review the options.

How long will I be in hospital?

You may need to stay overnight. Please bring an overnight bag so you are prepared. However, many people are able to go home the same day, especially if the operation is in the morning. If you do go home the same day, you will need someone else at home that night - this is always advised following a general anaesthetic.

Do I need a drain?

During the operation it is sometimes necessary for the surgeon to insert a drain, or drains, at the operation site, but your surgeon will advise you. These drains will ensure that there is no seepage from the operation scar.

The drainage fluid is blood stained to start, gradually becoming straw coloured. The amount varies from person to person and the quantity of

fluid is not related to the cancer. The drains will be removed when there is minimum drainage. It is possible to go home with a drain, if so a nurse will be organised to look after it.

What will my scar look like?

The scar following mastectomy is straight across the chest wall, from breastbone to just under the armpit or occasionally up into the armpit, leaving the chest wall flat, unless you have opted to have breast reconstruction.

The nipple is also removed; the scar has steristrips and is covered with a dressing.

After the operation

Before you go home you will be fitted with a temporary, false breast called a soft form (Comfie) so that you leave hospital maintaining a bust shape. Please bring a good fitting, total support bra with you. If you are unable to wear a bra then the soft form can be pinned to a vest or T-shirt. We will also discuss the breast form (prosthesis) and the best time for fitting it with you, **and ask you to contact us when you feel ready.**

Your steristrips will be removed 12 - 14 days after surgery by yourself or at the Mermaid Centre. Please keep your wound dry until the steristrips are removed. After your steristrips have been removed no dressing is required and the scar will be hidden when you wear a bra.

When will I know the results?

The breast tissue removed takes around 10 - 12 days to be processed in the laboratory. You will be offered an appointment around two weeks after your surgery and your consultant will discuss these results with you then.

If you need further support please ring the breast care nurses on 01872 252880/1.