

Care at Home After Nipple Sparing Mastectomy

What is a nipple sparing mastectomy?

A nipple sparing mastectomy is a breast surgery which is done to remove cancer to lower the risk of cancer after breast removal. During this surgery, the breast is removed, along with the cancer but the skin covering the breast, the nipple and area around it, (areola) remain. Saving the nipple and areola after breast removal surgery helps some women feel more comfortable with their shape and look in clothing.

Can anyone have a nipple sparing mastectomy?

If it is found that your nipple or areola have cancer, you may not be able to have this surgery. Your doctor will review your specific situation and let you know if a nipple sparing mastectomy is an option for you.

What will my nipple look and feel like after surgery?

After surgery, it is normal for your nipple to change color and to have some scabs form as you start to heal. After surgery, you will not have any feeling in your nipple. You may be asked to put Nitroglycerin cream on your nipple for several days to help increase the blood flow to the area. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to stop using this cream.

How should I take care of myself at home?

After your surgery it is important to check the following to make sure your nipple and areola are healing well after surgery:

- Look at your nipple every day and check for: increased drainage, increased swelling around the nipple, any odor, increased redness and or a change in temperature of skin around the nipple. Call your surgeon **right away** if you have any of these symptoms.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

- Call your surgeon/provider **right away** if you have a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher.
- You may shower _____.
- Do not** put your breast under water in a tub, pool or hot tub until your doctor says it is okay for you to do so.
- Keep your nipple covered with a Vaseline gauze. Remove this gauze to take a shower, then pat dry and reapply a clean Vaseline saturated gauze on the area.
- Follow the directions given to you on the use of Nitroglycerin ointment if ordered by your doctor. For more information, see the patient education handout, "[Nitroglycerin Ointment After Breast Cancer Surgery](#)".
- It is important to follow the lifting restrictions you were given to make sure you do not put too much stress or strain on your nipple and areola.

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor who performed your surgery **right away** if you have:

- A fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- Chills
- Increased drainage, redness or pain
- Any other questions or concerns