



Top Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

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Your guide to a smooth and confident recovery

Nursing phone number: 437-494-3536

Outside of business hours, texting is available on the nursing line. For emergencies, please go to your nearest emergency room.

Dressings, Binder & Wound Care

- At the end of surgery, your chest will be covered with **skin glue, tape, soft padding, and a surgical binder**.
- Please keep everything **clean, dry, and in place** until your first post-operative visit (usually **3–4 days**).
- At your first visit:
 - The outer padding and binder will be removed.
 - The **glue/tape remains in place**.
 - Your binder will be refitted, and you will continue to wear it **day and night for 4–6 weeks** (unless instructed otherwise).
- **Nipple grafts (if performed):**
 - Will be covered with protective “bolster” dressings.
 - These bolsters stay in place until removed at your first or second post-operative appointment.
 - Do not get them wet.
- Once cleared to shower (usually after the first visit), allow clean water to run gently over the chest — avoid scrubbing.
- The tape will gradually loosen with showering; it typically comes off around **3 weeks** or is removed by us.
- All stitches are internal and dissolving. If a small external knot is visible after 2 weeks, it may be gently trimmed at skin level with clean scissors.
- Mild spotting on dressings is normal; if active bleeding occurs, apply clean gauze and contact us if it continues.

Binder/Garment

- Your binder is an essential part of recovery and helps reduce swelling and protect the incisions.
- Wear your binder **24/7** for the first **4 weeks**, removing it only to shower (once permitted).
- After 4 weeks, you may transition to a **lighter compression vest** if recommended.
- Avoid using chest binders from before surgery unless cleared — medical-grade binders are required.

Pain & Medication

- Most patients are pleasantly surprised by how manageable the discomfort is.



- For the best baseline relief, take:
 - **Tylenol Extra Strength (Acetaminophen)** every **6 hours**
 - **Celebrex 200 mg** — every **12 hours** for the first 3 days
 - For additional relief if needed:
 - **Hydromorphone** — every **6 hours as required**
 - Tylenol + Celebrex provides excellent pain control with minimal side effects.
 - You may stop medications once you feel comfortable.
 - Pain medications — especially narcotics — can cause constipation. Consider:
 - **Colace 200 mg twice daily**
 - **Milk of Magnesia 15–30 cc at bedtime**
 - Ample fluids + fruit or fiber-rich foods
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Nipple Graft Care (if applicable)

- Bolster dressings protect the nipple graft for the first **5–7 days**.
 - Do **not** wet, disturb, peek under, or loosen the bolster dressings.
 - Avoid applying pressure or friction to the graft areas.
 - Once the bolsters are removed, you may begin gentle application of ointment (as directed).
 - Color changes are normal in the first weeks; the grafts gradually settle and evolve.
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Swelling, Bruising & Sensation

- Swelling, bruising, and tightness across the chest are normal and peak at **48–72 hours**.
 - Swelling improves significantly by 2–3 weeks.
 - Numbness of the chest and nipple area is expected; sensation often returns gradually over months but can remain reduced.
 - Firmness along the incision line is normal and improves with time.
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Showering

- You may shower once cleared at your first follow-up visit.
 - Allow water to run over the chest; pat dry with a clean towel.
 - Avoid hot tubs, baths, pools, and soaking for **4 weeks**.
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Mobility & Activity

- Begin **light walking** the day after surgery to maintain good circulation.
- Avoid:
 - Lifting anything heavier than 5 lbs
 - Raising your arms above shoulder height
 - Stretching the chest
 - Jogging, upper-body workouts, or strenuous exercise
- These restrictions remain for **6 weeks** unless otherwise instructed.



- Gradual return to full activity typically begins at **6 weeks**.

Sleeping Position

- Sleep on your **back**, slightly elevated, for the first **2–3 weeks**.
- Avoid sleeping on your side or stomach until cleared.

Scar Care & Massage

- Once the tape has fallen off (around **3 weeks**) and the incisions are fully dry and closed:
 - Begin **scar gel** twice daily.
 - After 1 week of gentle application, begin **light circular massage**.
 - After another week, progress to **firmer massage** to soften the incisions.
- Continue scar therapy for **2–3 months**.
- Avoid sun exposure or tanning over scars for **6 months**; UV can darken scars permanently.
- Silicone sheeting can be added if scars remain raised or red after 6 weeks.

Emotional Recovery

It is completely normal to feel emotional shifts after top surgery.

Swelling, asymmetry during early healing, and changes in chest appearance can temporarily feel overwhelming.

As healing progresses and the chest settles, most patients experience increasing comfort, confidence, and satisfaction with their results.

When to Contact Us

Please contact **Aspect Plastic Surgery** if you experience:

- Rapid swelling of one or both sides
- Increasing redness or warmth
- Foul-smelling drainage
- Persistent or worsening pain
- Fever > 38°C
- Shortness of breath, calf pain, or chest pain

If urgent and our office is closed, please visit **North York General Hospital Emergency Department** or your closest emergency facility.