

What to Expect Recovery After Surgery

After your reconstruction surgery you will likely feel tired and sore. Depending on the type of reconstruction you have, you could be discharged from the hospital in 1 to 3 days. Here are a few things to expect and prepare for during recovery. Please keep in mind that everyone's experience is different and you should always consult your surgeon.

- You may be too tired to shower but you can, possibly with assistance, *if you have permission from your surgeon*.
- Your energy level should increase in approximately two weeks and you might be able to return to your normal activities in 4-8 weeks. *With permission from your surgeon*, this includes sexual activity, heavy lifting and sports.
- Your drains may be removed usually 7-14 days after surgery.
- Your stitches may be removed in 7-14 days as well.
- It might take 1-2 years for your scars to fade.
- Many cities have local support groups for breast cancer survivors. You may want to join one to connect with other women who may understand what you've been through.

If you have had an autologous breast reconstruction:

- It may be some time before you can use the parts of your body from which the tissue was taken to form your new breast(s), i.e. stomach, shoulder or buttocks.
- After healing, you and your doctor should discuss your aesthetic results, including a conversation about any revisionary procedures that might need to take place.

If you have had breast implant reconstruction:

- Follow your surgeons instructions for stretching your arms to regain full mobility.
- Within a few weeks following your surgery, you should be able to lift your arms above your head again.
- Pain and soreness should subside in approximately two weeks.
- You will need to see your surgeon on a weekly basis to fill your expander(s) if you have had tissue expander to implant breast reconstruction. Once your expanders have been filled completely, you will need to schedule an exchange surgery to replace the expander(s) with permanent implant(s), either silicone or saline. This procedure is sometimes viewed as easier than the initial breast reconstruction by many patients and the final implant should feel much softer than the expander.

Important Information: Every patient is different and their reconstruction options and their results may vary. All depictions on the site are for illustration purposes only. Whether or not you have breast reconstruction is a decision you need to make in consultation with your physician. Only you and your physician can determine the best option for you. Please ask your doctor to explain the benefits and risk of various reconstruction options and whether they are right for you.

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