Instructions for You Before and After Surgery

- You must arrange for a responsible adult, a loved one for example, to stay with you at least 2-3 weeks at home after surgery. You will need care at home and will not be able to do childcare, cooking, laundry, driving, lifting, reaching, etc. Plan to be a ‘couch-potato’ and rest for at least 2 weeks, only getting up to walk in the house, or down the block and back with someone walking with you at all times. A fall could make you bleed and cause severe complications.

- Do not take Aspirin, aspirin-containing products, Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), or Vitamin E for 2 weeks before or after your surgery.

- Smokers are not offered surgery. No smoking, avoid second-hand smoke for 2 weeks before and after surgery.

- A bladder catheter is placed during surgery, and is usually removed the first day after surgery. You will have at least 2 drainage tubes in the breast and 2 tubes in the back wounds after surgery. Your nurse will teach you (and your family) how to empty the drains, and how to record the amounts of drainage. (See Drain Care Instruction Sheet). The drains will be removed in our Clinic within 2-4 weeks after surgery.

- Breast and back discomfort is variable after surgery. Pain medication will be given to you. Once home, take this medication with food to prevent stomach upset.

- After surgery, you will have comfortable dressings for gentle support and protection. You will lie in bed head elevated 45 degrees and knees bent comfortably. You will have stockings and electronic squeezers on your legs to prevent blood clots in the legs or clots traveling to the lungs (embolus). It is still very important for you to move your knees, ankles and legs, to dangle your legs over the side of the bed, and then to walk after surgery as instructed. Physical therapy may assist you getting out of bed and walking. You should plan to lie on a sofa, recliner chair, or in bed with pillows under the knees. When not reclined, plan to walk.

- You need to protect your breast, back, and the incisions. No driving, leaning over, lifting anything heavier than your dinner plate, no housework, no reaching above the head or behind you, no laundry or housework, for at least 3 weeks. Avoid vacuuming or sweeping motions. These can make you bleed, which can injure or kill the lovely breast muscle and skin.
• Keep your surgical incisions and dressings dry. At your first clinic visit we will change the dressing, perhaps remove a drain. Back drains may remain in place up to 1 month or longer. Once back drains are removed, occasionally patients will collect serum fluid (“seroma”). This may require a painless small aspiration procedure to remove the fluid with a needle and syringe in the clinic.

• Do NOT sit in the sun; do NOT use a heat lamp on any part of the back or breast. No sun.

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• Take sponge baths only. No showers or tub baths until we tell you it is ‘okay’, usually after certain drains are removed.

• Expect some numbness of back, breast skin and incisions for up to 2 years. Much sensation will return in 1 year.

• Expect to be off work for a minimum of 3-6 weeks. Usually, it takes at least 3-4 weeks to feel strong and flexible enough to drive, sit, or do your job. If your job requires more strenuous activity, plan to be off work 6 weeks.

• You can expect to feel tired or worn out during the first 2 weeks or more after surgery, as your body uses lots of your stored protein and iron to heal the operated belly. Vitamins and a good diet can help. Allow extra time for rest, and take naps! Sexual intercourse may be resumed 4 weeks after surgery.

For questions or concerns, such as pain, drainage or fever, contact the Plastic Surgery Clinic:

Antioch Medical Center (925) 813-6330, after hours (925) 813-3100

Walnut Creek Medical Center (925) 295-5885, after hours (925) 295-4070