

# Post-Operative Care Instructions For TRAM Flap Breast Reconstruction

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1. You will have an abdominal binder on when you wake up after surgery. You will need to wear an abdominal binder for at least 6 WEEKS after surgery. You may be more comfortable if you wear a cotton T-shirt under the binder. Be sure the T-shirt is snug (without wrinkles). Wrinkles can make pressure marks on your skin. The binder should not put pressure on the “pedicle” of your flap. Your skin will be marked and you will be instructed which areas to avoid prior to leaving the hospital.

The first week or so after surgery you may have some difficulty standing up straight. This is expected. Don't force yourself up straight. You may need to sleep in a recliner or propped up with pillows under your knees. Many people experience back pain as a result of this temporary abnormal posture.

2. You will have two drains in your abdomen after surgery. They will stay in place for 1-2 weeks after surgery depending on the amount of drainage. Each reconstructed breast will also have a drain which will be removed sooner than the abdominal drains.
3. You will have small pieces of tape along the incision. DO NOT remove this tape even if they are soiled.
4. You may have trouble moving your bowels after surgery. You should be taking a stool softener such as Colace twice daily until you are no longer taking pain medicine. It's OK to use a glycerin suppository. These are both available over the counter at your pharmacy. Be sure to drink plenty of fluid. You should walk around, but take it easy.
5. **ABSOLUTELY NO HEAVY LIFTING OR VIGOROUS EXERCISE FOR 6-8 WEEKS.** We are thrilled if you feel great and want to get right back in the swing of things, but **DON'T DO IT.** Heavy lifting and exercise increase the pressure in your vessels and can cause bleeding even 3-4 weeks after surgery.
6. You may accumulate some fluid under the skin after the drains are pulled. If this is the case, we will drain the fluid in the office. This will not be painful. Your skin on your abdomen will be numb for several weeks after surgery. Limiting your activity to walking around the house (**NO HOUSE OR LAWN WORK**) and constant use of your binder will minimize the risk of this happening.
7. **NO SMOKING** for two months before and six months after surgery. Smoking reduces blood supply to your skin and impairs your ability to heal.
8. You may shower after discharge from the hospital. You should have someone available to help you the first time in case you get light-headed. You should secure your drains so that they do not swing. Nylon “fanny-packs” work well to hold the drains or you can tie them to a shoe string around your neck.