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Mastectomy

Your medical doctor or surgeon has recommended that you have a mastectomy. This procedure is used when a woman has a tumor in her breast that needs to be removed, along with lymph nodes in some cases. This is done when more than a quarter of the breast would need to be removed and would cause the breast to be deformed. It is also done in the event that there is more than one area with cancer, or if the cancer is fast spreading. In some cases, breast reconstruction can be done at the same time. If you are interested in this, please speak with your surgeon before surgery.

You will be asked to come to the hospital about 2 hours before you are to have the surgery. If you are having Sentinel node biopsy, you will be asked to come to the hospital approximately six hours prior to surgery. (You will receive specific instruction if this applies to you) You will be given general anesthesia to keep you free from pain and asleep during the procedure. The surgeon will make an incision in your breast and remove the breast tissue, nipple, areola (dark area around your nipple) and in some cases, lymph nodes. The tissue is sent to the pathology department for diagnosis.

The surgeon will then place a few sutures or staples in the skin to close the wound. Your scar will run from the center of your chest, a little further in than where your breast began, towards the armpit, almost to side of your body. You will have a drain placed under your arm to collect any fluid that builds up. A dressing will then be applied and you will leave the operating room.

The surgery takes about one and a half to two hours. Most people stay a few days in the hospital. You will be given a mastectomy bra at the hospital. See reverse side for postoperative suggestions. Also, you may be shown arm exercises at the hospital to restore range of movement to your arm.

You will need to return to your surgeons office for suture or staple removal about one week after the surgery. Suture removal is quick and painless. Also, your drain will be removed at this time. After that, you may notice a ridge at the surgical site. This is scar tissue and will fade away within a few weeks. Watch for any changes in the chest wall on the side of surgery. Remember to take precautions with the arm on the side you had surgery on. You will be instructed on these as well as exercises before you leave the hospital.

If you do not hear from our office within 48 hours of your surgery, please call us for biopsy results. Please be aware that sometimes pathology takes a little longer.

If at anytime you have concerns, please call our office.