

Lumpectomy: Returning Home

After you have a lumpectomy, it'll take some time for your body to heal and it may be several days before you can get back to your daily routine.

Here are some things you can do to help yourself heal.

For the first few days after surgery, you'll probably feel tired.

You may have a bandage on your breast, and the skin around the cut-- the incision--may feel tender and swollen.

Rest when you need to and try to get enough sleep.

It may be most comfortable to sleep on the side that wasn't operated on, and use a pillow to support the affected breast.

For the first week, wear a comfortable support bra, like a sports bra, all the time, even when you sleep.

Before you leave the hospital, you'll get instructions on how to take care of your incision and your drain, if you have one.

You'll need to keep your incision clean and dry, so ask your care provider when it's okay to take a shower or bath.

You'll probably get a prescription for pain medicine and maybe an antibiotic.

Take your medicines exactly as directed.

If you have any problems with the medicines, talk to your care provider.

It's important not to drive while you're taking pain medicine.

Your care provider can tell you when it's safe to start driving again.

You'll need to take it easy as you're healing, so until your care provider says it's okay, don't lift anything heavy, like a bag of any kind or a child.

And don't do any difficult activities, especially ones that use the arm on the affected side.

But walking is good for you, because it can help prevent blood clots and other problems, like constipation.

So try to walk a little more each day.

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Now, while you heal, you'll need to watch for problems.

Call your care provider if you have signs of infection, such as increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness; red streaks leading from the incision; pus draining from the incision; or a fever.

And call your care provider if you have other problems, such as pain that doesn't get better when you take pain medicine, sudden swelling of your arm, hand, or fingers, or bright red blood that soaks through your bandage.

This may seem like a lot to do, but all these things are important, because they can help you heal and stay out of the hospital.