

# Mastectomy for Breast Cancer: Before Your Surgery

A mastectomy is surgery to remove a breast.

It's often done as part of breast cancer treatment.

Having a mastectomy is a personal experience, and not everyone will have the same emotions or the same concerns.

When you're preparing to have a mastectomy, it may help to know how the surgery is done and what to expect.

You'll meet with your doctor before the surgery to learn about the procedure and talk about any decisions you may need to make.

Before the surgery, you'll get medicine to make you sleep and keep you from feeling pain.

There are many ways to do this surgery.

The incision can be made in several different ways, depending on the location of the cancer and your treatment plan.

But to begin, the doctor will make a cut—an incision—into the breast to remove breast tissue.

The doctor may also remove some lymph nodes to check them for cancer.

Lymph nodes may also be removed when cancer has already been found in the area.

And they'll place one or more tubes, called drains, to collect fluid from the surgery area.

To finish the surgery, your doctor will use stitches under the skin.

Your incision will be closed with tape strips or skin glue, and then covered with a bandage.

The amount of time your surgery will take will depend on what needs to be done.

Your doctor will let you know how long your surgery may take.

After surgery, you'll spend some time in the recovery room.

And you may have a special bandage, called a binder, around your chest.

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You may be able to go home the same day, although it's possible you may need to stay in the hospital for a few days.

How long you'll stay in the hospital will depend on what you need to heal and recover.

Before the surgery, tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take, especially blood thinners like aspirin.

Some can raise the risk of bleeding or cause problems with anesthesia.

Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before surgery.

And follow your doctor's directions for preparing for your surgery, including when you should stop eating and drinking.

Bring your photo ID, health insurance card, and any paperwork your hospital may have asked for.

Be sure you have someone who can take you home.

Anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive or get home on your own.

You'll get instructions on how to take care of yourself at home, including when you can shower and how to care for your incision and drains.

Having a mastectomy can be stressful.

But knowing what to expect and how to prepare can help.

And remember, you can always call your care provider if you have questions or concerns.