

Open Breast Biopsy: Returning Home

After an open breast biopsy, your body needs time to heal.

For the first few days, you may feel more tired than usual.

And you may need a couple of days to get back to your regular routine.

The biopsy area may feel swollen and tender.

And you may have some bruising on your breast.

The tenderness in your breast should go away in about a week.

And any bruising will fade after a couple of weeks.

But you may continue to have some swelling in your breast for up to 6 to 8 weeks after surgery.

And you may be able to feel a hard area in your breast where the biopsy was done.

This is a normal part of the healing process.

The area will get softer in the weeks after surgery.

After you heal, you may have a scar where the incision was.

This usually fades with time.

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

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

It may be more comfortable to sleep on your back or on the side that wasn't biopsied.

For the first few days, you may find that it's more comfortable to wear a supportive bra all the time— even when you sleep.

You can also use an ice pack to help relieve swelling and mild pain.

Put the ice pack on the area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time.

And remember to put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

You'll need to take it easy while you heal.

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Walking and light activities are fine.

But until your doctor says it's okay, avoid activities that put pressure on your chest or that require you to move your upper body a lot.

This may include things like housework, yard work, jogging, and other intense exercise.

Keep your incision clean and dry.

Follow your doctor's instructions about when you can take a shower or bath.

When your doctor says it's okay to shower, gently wash the skin near the incision with warm water.

But don't scrub the incision.

Gently pat it dry with a clean towel.

If your clothes rub the incision or it oozes fluid, cover the incision with a gauze bandage.

Then change the bandage every day or more often if needed.

If you have strips of tape on the incision, you'll want to leave the tape on for a week or until it falls off.

Take your medicines as prescribed.

If you get a prescription for pain medicine, take it exactly as directed.

And be sure to let your doctor know if you have any problems with your medicines or any other problems while you heal.

Call your doctor 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 doctor if you have other problems, such as new or worse pain, or bright red blood that soaks through your bandage.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always call your doctor.

Taking care of yourself after surgery can help you avoid problems and help your body heal.