



at St Vincent's Private Hospital East Melbourne

BREAST SURGERY FACT SHEET: GOING INTO HOSPITAL

Surgeon: Miss Jane O'Brien

This general fact sheet is for anyone who is going into hospital for breast surgery, so not all of the issues will be relevant to your particular circumstances. It discusses what to consider before going into hospital and what you can expect before, and immediately after surgery. You will be given / sent information with general hospital information and also specific instructions on what time you are to come in, how long you need to fast and directions about where you are to go on arrival.

Before You Come to Hospital

Remove all makeup, nail polish, jewellery and any body piercings.

WHAT SHOULD I TAKE INTO HOSPITAL?

Going into hospital may be a new experience for you and it can be daunting if you are not sure what to expect. Here are some suggestions on what you may want to take with you.

X-rays

In most circumstances Jane O'Brien will have your mammograms etc but if you have them, bring them with you into hospital.

Medications

Bring any medications you take regularly with you into hospital. Unless advised otherwise by your surgeon or anaesthetist, continue all your regular medications. Take all these medications (regardless of fasting) with a small amount of water at the usual times.

Bra

You may be advised to resume wearing a bra soon after your breast operation. Your normal bra may be unsuitable, or simply too small because of normal post-operative swelling. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- The most important thing is that your bra is comfortable. Crop tops are particularly useful. Front fastening bras can sometimes be easier, especially if you have had surgery to your underarm. Sports bras can be useful as they are comfortable and supportive but should not be too firm. Underwire bras may be inadvisable depending on the site and nature of your surgery.
- If you have any queries regarding bras, ask either Jane O'Brien or our breast care nurse for advice before you come into hospital.

Miscellaneous

- **DO NOT APPLY MOISTURISER/SKIN CREAM TO YOUR TORSO/BREAST AREA FOR THE FEW DAYS PRIOR TO YOUR SURGERY AS IT INTERFERES WITH THE ADHERENCE OF THE SURGICAL DRESSINGS**
- Loose change for newspapers etc. Do not bring in valuables or large sums of money.
- Magazines, light reading (perhaps even bring the breast literature we have provided you with for reference)
- CD walkman/tape player/radio with headphones (and favourite music/ books on tape) - this may be useful if you have difficulty sleeping when you are in the hospital or difficulty concentrating when trying to read.
- Toiletries
- List of important contact phone numbers

The following is applicable only to those patients who are staying in hospital overnight or longer.

Nightwear

Bring loose, comfortable nightwear that is easy to put on and take off allowing easy access to the breast and armpit, as a nurse will need to check your wound/dressings regularly after surgery. Front buttoning pyjamas are IDEAL. Otherwise choose a nightdress that opens FULLY down the front. This saves the potential embarrassment of having to uncover more than you need to when the wound/dressings are checked. A long, closed nightdress is NOT appropriate and can be

extremely awkward, especially if after your surgery you have plastic drain tubes running from your wound to drainage bottles.

Clothing

Even if you are going to be in hospital a few days, you will usually be able to get up and out of bed the day after your operation. Some people prefer to sit out of bed and move around the ward in their clothing rather than in nightwear, so it is sometimes a good idea to bring a loose, comfortable two-piece outfit with you with a zipper or buttons in front, but not anything too precious in case of soiling/staining.

What happens before the operation?

You will be admitted to hospital either the day before or on the day of your operation. If your operation requires a hookwire localisation (a procedure which marks the area in the breast with a fine wire), this will be done in the radiology department under local anaesthetic before surgery. If you are having a sentinel node biopsy the lymphatic mapping procedure will be performed in the nuclear medicine department before the surgery - For further information on this procedure see information pamphlet- **Sentinel Node Biopsy**

Depending on your movements, your surgeon, Jane O'Brien will see you either on the ward or when you go to the operating suite before you go to sleep. Our breast care nurse will also attempt to see you before your operation. This is a good time to raise any final queries and talk about any remaining concerns you may have. You will be asked to give your written consent prior to the operation, which confirms that you understand what is being done and that you are agreeing to it. It is a good idea to read the relevant written information that you have been given prior to signing the consent form so that your consent is as "informed" as possible.

You will be asked to have nothing to eat or drink for several hours (usually about 6 hours) before the operation to minimise the risks associated with an anaesthetic. You will be asked on multiple occasions to confirm which side (left or right or both) is being operated on. This is a routine safety precaution procedure. You will also be asked about any allergies you may have.

The anaesthetist will also see you to check that you are fit for anaesthetic. Depending on your age, general health and the nature of your surgery you may have had some pre-op tests arranged. These may include blood tests, a chest x-ray and a heart tracing (ECG). The anaesthetist will place a needle in your hand or arm in the anaesthetic room. You will not be quite asleep when you are wheeled into the operating theatre. There you will go straight to sleep and will know nothing of the operation.

What happens after the operation?

Details can be found in our fact sheet - **After your Breast Surgery**. More information relating to specific operations can also be found in individual information sheets.

Discharge from Hospital

You should have an adult accompany you home on discharge. It is not safe for you to drive yourself or to use public transport unaccompanied.

- Confirm that a follow up appointment to see Jane O'Brien has been arranged.
- Request a medical certificate if required
- Take your x-rays home with you.
- Make sure your regular medications including any new ones started during your admission have been given to you.
- If you have drain tubes, check that the arrangements for their nursing care at home have been made.

Useful Contact Numbers :

- Breast Care Nurse - 0438 202 092
- The Breast Centre - 9928 6261
- Ward Level 4 - 9928 6877
- St Vincent`s Private Hospital East Melbourne Reception - 9928 6640

FOR URGENT MEDICAL QUERIES JANE O'BRIEN MAY BE CONTACTED DIRECTLY VIA ST VINCENTS HOSPITAL EAST MELBOURNE SWITCHBOARD ON 9411 7111