



Breast Surgery – Mastectomy





Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability for the NHS to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place.

Our waiting lists have been clinically reviewed to ensure patients are seen in priority order and we continue to monitor these lists. This may mean you wait longer for your care, but we will be in touch as soon as possible with details of your appointment.

This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Mastectomy

This information is for women who are having an operation for the removal of the breast. It explains the reason for the operation, the extent of it, what is involved, the after effects and any significant risks that there may be.

A mastectomy involves the removal of the whole breast including the nipple and the areola. This would leave you with a scar against the chest wall.

Reasons for this surgery

Your breast surgeon will have discussed with you the reasons for surgery and any other available treatment. The aim is to remove the cancerous tumour with the breast. You will find information about bra fitting and a false breast fitting at the end of this leaflet.

You will also have the opportunity to discuss your **treatment plan** with the Breast Care nurse. The nurse can show you photographs of previous patients who have undergone similar operations and talk about the hospital stay and any further treatments that may be required.

Please contact the nurse with any worries or concerns that you or your family may have, on 01582 49 7103.

Preparation

You will be given a provisional date for the operation by the breast surgeon at your outpatient appointment. We will give you confirmation of this date as well as an appointment for your pre-operation health check, which will take place with a nurse a few days before your operation.

- The health check includes some or all of the following checks: your medical history, blood pressure, blood test, a chest x-ray, and an ECG (a heart tracing). Some checks may be done earlier.



- Please do not hesitate to ask the nurse any questions you may have about the procedure; the nurse will also discuss the consent issues with you and ask you to sign the consent form.
- Please tell the nurse if you have diabetes, or any allergies.
- Please bring in any medicines you are currently taking and tell the nurse if you are taking warfarin or any other blood thinning medication.
- If you do not attend this pre-operation check-up the operation cannot go ahead.

Risks and complications

Breast surgery is usually very safe and the most serious complications are very rare. These need to be weighed against the risks of not having the surgery when making your decision. There are some risks associated with most procedures. For breast surgery they may include the following:

Bleeding – this can occur early or late after the surgery but is generally drained away without problem by the ‘drains’ that are in place. Rarely, a collection of blood may need to be removed under anaesthetic.

Infection – this can be controlled by the use of antibiotics; occasionally intravenous (directly into the bloodstream) antibiotics may be needed; and more rarely surgery might be necessary

Bruising – some bruising around the site of the wound is quite common, this will settle down in a few weeks.

Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT) you can reduce the risk of this by being as mobile as possible at home.

Fluid collection – this is very common after breast surgery, you may develop fluid collections which may need to be removed by needle aspiration.

Pain/discomfort – in the area of the operation should improve with time, but some pain/discomfort in this area may persist.

Recurrence – the cancer can sometimes recur, you will be kept under surveillance and told what to look out for.

Please speak to your breast surgeon before your operation if you have any concerns about these risks.

Emotional, social or personal adjustments

Learning of your cancer diagnosis and having an operation can happen in a short space of time and be a very stressful experience, which can often leave you feeling confused and



upset. When you first go home you may find that you are able to cope some days better than others. It takes time to adjust and gradually you will be able to resume your normal activities and way of life.

For further information

If you have any questions or feel any time you or your family would like to discuss any aspect of your treatment or your feelings further, no matter how trivial it may seem, please do not hesitate to contact your Breast Care Nurse on 01582 497103.

Support Groups/ useful contact numbers

Nurse Practitioner 01582 491122

Hospital at Home

Cancer Bacup 0808 800 1234

www.cancerbacup.org.uk

Breast Cancer Care 0808 800 6000

www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Information Line 0845 601 6161

L & D Breast Cancer Support Group 01582 497103

Guidance for Patients

It is important that while you are waiting for your surgery you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this reviewed at your Doctor's surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment. Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping, advice can be found at your local pharmacy or Doctor's surgery.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Red Flag Symptoms

If you experience any of the following while waiting for your treatment please contact your Breast Care Nurse:

Enlargement of the lump

Bleeding from the skin of the breast



Lumps in your armpit or neck.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

If you experience an increase in pain, inability to weight bear on this limb or a significant reduction in mobility, you should in the first instance contact your General Practitioner for review and advice.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic

Contact Us

To change or cancel your appointment please call:

For Luton & Dunstable Hospital – 01582 561385 – Monday to Friday between 08:30 – 17:00. Alternatively visit <https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-luton-and-dunstable-university-hospital/>

For Bedford Hospital – 01234 792172
Monday to Friday from 09.00am to 5pm.

Alternatively, you can visit our website to request a change to your appointment here:-

Luton Site: <https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-luton-and-dunstable-university-hospital/>

Bedford site: [Change / Cancel Your Appointment | Bedford Hospital \(bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk\)](https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-bedford-hospital/)



To change or cancel your surgery admission date, please telephone the contact number on your admission letter between 09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday.

For any other queries, please call or email your consultant's secretary. Their contact details will be on the most recent letter from your consultant.