

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION:

Implants or Tissue Expanders

What to Expect

OPERATION DURATION

This surgery is performed under General Anaesthetic.

If completed as a stand alone procedure, it usually takes approximately 2-2.5 hours.

If completed in combination with a mastectomy, it usually takes approximately 2-4 hours.

HOSPITAL STAY

Insertion of tissue expanders or implants, as a stand-alone procedure:

You will routinely be in the hospital for 1 night.

Mastectomy during the same surgery:

Your hospital stay will be longer. Your Breast Surgeon will determine this. Everyone is different, and your recovery will be tailored to you, the average is 2-3 nights stay.

Dr Taylor will not be in to visit you every day whilst you are in hospital - he will phone your nurses for daily updates and provide over-the-phone instructions. He will come in to see you if you have any issues.

TISSUE EXPANSION

If you have a tissue expander inserted, a small volume of fluid will be inserted into this during your initial operation. Once your wounds have healed, you will be required to come to our clinic for more fluid to be inserted into the expander to stretch the skin slowly.

This first appointment is usually around 4 weeks post-operatively. You will have several appointments, usually 2-4 weeks apart, to insert a small amount of fluid each time until the desired volume is reached and you are happy with the size.

Once your expansion is complete, you will have a consultation with Dr Taylor to discuss and book your subsequent surgery. This next surgery will be to exchange the expander for your formal implant.

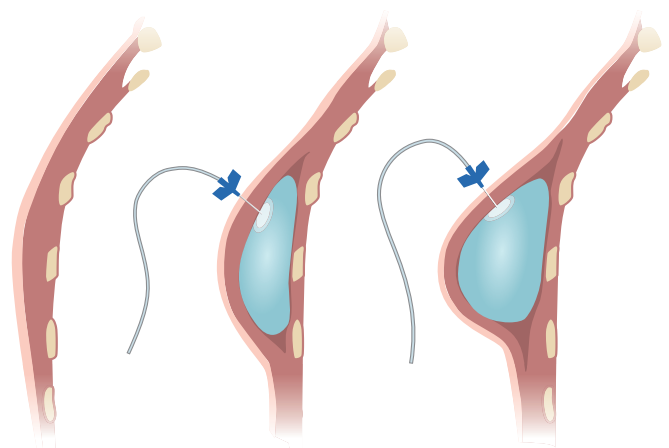


Diagram: Tissue Expanders for Breast Reconstruction

What Complications May Occur With This Procedure?

GENERAL POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF ANY PROCEDURE

- Infection at the surgical site
- Allergic reaction to equipment, materials or medication
- Blood clot in your leg or lungs
- Chest infection
- Acute kidney injury

SPECIFIC POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF THIS PROCEDURE

- Wound healing problems - wound has delayed healing and may open up (dehiscence)
- Lump developing under your wound caused by blood collecting (haematoma)
- Lump developing under your wound caused by fluid collecting (seroma)
- Developing a hard lump in the breast (fat necrosis)
- Change of sensation on the breast skin and around the scars
- Loss or change of nipple sensation and or reaction to cold or touch
- Asymmetry between breasts
- Shape or contour irregularities
- Mastectomy skin necrosis - where some of the skin at the edge of your wound dies as a result of reduced blood flow
- Altered sensation (temporary or permanent) in the breast skin and around the chest scars

SPECIFIC POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF BREAST IMPLANTS

- Developing a collection of fluid (seroma) in the pocket where the implant is
- Capsule contracture, where scar tissue that your body naturally forms thickens and tightens around the implant
- Rupture of the implant (consequence of capsular contracture)

- Kinking and rippling (consequence of capsular contracture)
- Infection of the implant
- Breast implant-associated illness (BII)
- Anaplastic large-cell lymphoma (ALCL) - a rare cancer developing within the fluid or capsule around the implant

CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROCEDURE

- Discomfort, bruising and swelling (temporary)
- Scarring on the breast
- Numbness of the residual breast skin

How to Prepare for Your Procedure

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU BOOK OFF WORK

This depends on your profession and the specific surgery you undergo. Your specific requirements will be discussed with you on an individual basis.

For example, an admin role would require approximately 4 weeks. A physical role may be 6-8 weeks, depending on job requirements.

If you require a medical certificate, please email admin@drduncantaylor.com.au.

FASTING

You are required to fast for General Anaesthesia. You cannot have any food or fluids (including lollies and chewing gum) 6 hours prior to your surgery.

You can have some sips of water only up to 2 hours prior to your surgery and nothing after this time.

If you take regular medication, please check with our nurse to see if you should be taking your medication in the lead-up to/on the day of your surgery. Some medications should be withheld.

THE MORNING OF SURGERY

Please arrive at the hospital approximately 2 hours before your surgery start time - Our Practice Manager will email you your admission information (time/where to go) 1-2 weeks before your surgery date.

Dr Taylor will see you in the pre-operative area before you go into theatre. He will mark out your breast/s for your surgery; this must be completed whilst you are awake, as he requires you to be standing.

PRE-OP WASH

Please purchase a pre-op chlorhexidine wash from the pharmacy. Use this whilst showering, the night before and the morning of your surgery.

SURGICAL GARMENT

You will need to purchase a surgical compression bra prior to your surgery. Our clinic will provide you with information on the garments you will require.

Please bring this with you on the day of surgery - bring it into the theatre. **Wear your garment 24/7 for 6 weeks** (including in the hospital). You can remove the garment to shower).

DRAINS

If you have a mastectomy during the same surgery, a drain will be inserted into each breast. How long these remain will be determined by your breast surgeon and the amount of output. If you are required to go home with them in situ, you will have a nurse from Hospital in the Home (HITH) come to visit you daily.

If you had your mastectomy during a previous surgery, you may not require a drain for this surgery. If you do have a drain inserted, it is likely to be removed before your discharge from the hospital.

Post-Operative Instructions

ACTIVITY

You can get up and moving the same day after your surgery, once you have recovered from your general anaesthetic. Please do not do any physical activity or heavy lifting over 10 kgs for 4-6 weeks. No rigorous activities including tennis, horse riding, golf or aerobics for 8 weeks. After this time you can ease back into your usual activities.

You can drive after approximately 2 weeks or when you feel able to safely manoeuvre a vehicle.

PAIN RELIEF

You should not be in significant pain after your surgery. Your anaesthetist will prescribe regular pain relief to take on the ward post-surgery. If you have pain on top of this, you should ask for additional pain medication, which will be prescribed on your drug chart should you need it.

You will not be discharged from the hospital until your pain is well managed on oral medications. Please take paracetamol regularly. If you have severe pain that is not responding to the pain relief, please phone our nurse during office hours.

Please do not put ice or heat packs on your wounds.

Do not take aspirin.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORIES

You may be prescribed some anti-inflammatories whilst you are in hospital and you will also be discharged with some. Please take the entire course, even if you are not in pain. Please take this medication as prescribed on the box by your anaesthetist.

ANTIBIOTICS

You will be given IV antibiotics in hospital and a 5 days course of oral antibiotics to go home with. Please take the full course.

BLEEDING

If the wound starts to bleed, please apply firm pressure for 15 minutes. If a dressing is in place, please do this over the top of the dressing (do not remove the dressing).

This should control the bleeding. However, if it is not easily controlled or does not subside, please phone our nurse specialist during working hours, go to an after-hours GP clinic or visit an emergency department.

INFECTION

If your wound or breast becomes hot, swollen, oozes pus, or you are spiking temperatures, you may have an infection. Please phone our nurse immediately within business hours or attend your GP, after-hours GP or Emergency.

REMOVAL OF SUTURES & DRESSINGS

Sutures used during these procedures do not require removal and will dissolve on their own.

WOUND & DRESSING CARE

Your wounds will be covered with surgical tape and glue; this is waterproof, and you can shower as usual and pat dry.

You can remove this dressing gently after approximately 3-4 weeks.

If you do have a standard dressing on, please sponge bath around these to avoid getting the dressing wet and leave it intact until you are seen in the nurse dressing clinic 5 -10 days post-op.

Do not immerse the wound in water i.e. swimming or have a bath for 6 weeks, or until the wound is completely healed.

Bruising takes around 2-3 weeks to resolve, and swelling can take up to 3-6 months to resolve completely.

MASSAGING FOR SCAR REDUCTION

Commence massaging your scars and breast once your dressings are removed and wounds have healed – approximately 3-4 weeks post-op.

It is recommended that you massage your scars with a good moisturiser (e.g. Sorbolene or QV) or Bio-Oil for 2 minutes, twice daily. Wipe off any excess product, then apply either:

- **A silicone gel** (e.g. Strataderm), which dries to form a protective film over the scar, or
- **Silicone tape.**

Continue this treatment for 3–6 months.

SLEEP

Do not sleep on your stomach for 6 weeks.

Other Useful Tips

The power outlet in your hospital room is often quite far away from your bed - we suggest bringing a long charging cable for your phone so that you can keep it within reach.

Your Follow Up

Dr Taylor will be in contact with the nurses looking after you on the ward. If you are well post-op, he will discharge you after speaking with your nurse over the phone. He will only come in to see you on the ward if you are having any issues.

If you are concerned at all or have any questions, please phone our clinic to speak with our practice nurse.

The following follow up appointments will be scheduled for you:

- 5-10 days post surgery Nurse check-up for wound checks.
- 6 weeks post surgery review consultation with Dr Taylor.