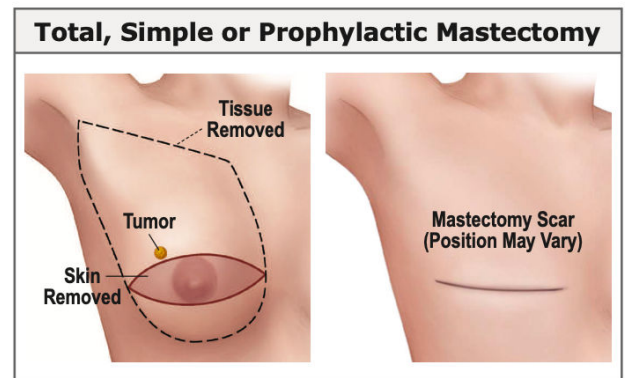
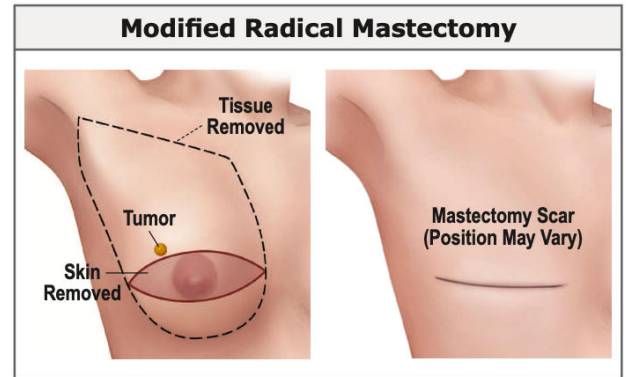


# Mastectomy

## Female Patient

**Mastectomy** is a general term used to describe the surgical procedure to remove the breast. Ask your surgeon which of the mastectomy surgeries you will receive. There are several types of mastectomy surgeries:

- **Modified Radical Mastectomy:**
  - Removes the tumor, breast tissue, nipple, areola, underarm lymph nodes and the lining over the chest muscles.
  - Preserves the pectoralis muscle.
  - This surgery may also be referred to as a total, conservative or limited mastectomy.
- **Total, Simple or Prophylactic Mastectomy:**
  - Removes the tumor, breast tissue, nipple, areola and some of the lymph nodes close to the breast tissue.
  - Preserves the underarm lymph nodes and pectoralis muscle.



### Mastectomy Advantages:

- Mastectomy removes 95 percent of the breast gland and reduces local recurrence of cancer to the lowest possible rate.
- Reconstruction to restore your body image (breast) is available using implants or your own body tissues.

### Mastectomy Disadvantages:

- Mastectomy changes body image because of the removal of the breast.
- Prosthesis or reconstruction is needed to restore body image (breast).
- Hospitalization and recovery time are slightly longer than lumpectomy.

If you would like to discuss mastectomy surgery with someone who has experienced it, ask your healthcare provider for the name of a breast cancer patient or call the American Cancer Society and ask to have a volunteer call you. It is very important that you understand the surgical procedure and have your questions answered.

Reconstruction of the breast is an option for some women wish to consider. Talk with your surgeon prior to your surgery. Some women may have immediate reconstruction while others have delayed reconstruction surgery. Ask for written information on reconstruction to better understand the options available for women who have a mastectomy.

## **Surgery**

Surgery for mastectomy is performed in a surgical facility. Prior to your surgery, you will have a pre-admission work-up which will include blood work and any other test(s) your physician may feel is necessary. You will need to bring your insurance card or any special instructions to the hospital. Inform your nurse of any allergies you have and any medications you presently take, including non-prescription, herbal or vitamins. A list of any other physicians involved in your care, such as a heart specialist, needs to be provided. Your nurse will give you instructions concerning any special preparations before surgery.

Admission for surgery is early the same day. The length of surgery, without immediate reconstruction, is approximately one hour. Recovery time in a post-anesthesia room requires several hours. Immediate breast reconstruction will require a longer period of time. Some mastectomies may be done as outpatient allowing you to return home the same day. Hospitalization may last from one to several days.

## **After Surgery**

Most patients can control pain after surgery with oral medication after they are able to eat and drink. As soon as you are awake, you will be able to walk to the bathroom with assistance. It is important that you elevate your surgical arm on a pillow above the level of your heart to prevent swelling. Use your arm to wash your face, comb your hair and feed yourself. However, do not lift anything over several pounds until your physician gives you permission.

Surgeons use several different methods to close surgical incisions. Your surgeon may use removable stitches, dissolvable stitches (with/without Steri-Strips™), staples (with/without Steri- Strips™) or skin glue (with/without Steri-Strips™). When your first surgical dressing is changed, it is very important that you look at your incision to learn what is normal so you can later evaluate changes that occur.

After surgery, you may have one or several drains coming from your incision area. Drains need to be pinned to your clothing and emptied when they become heavy. Do not allow them to pull on your skin. It is very important to accurately record the amount of drainage emptied because physicians determine when to remove the drains based on the amount of drainage per day. Your physician or nurse will provide complete instructions for dressing changes and care of your drains.

## **Recovery**

Recovery at home will require several weeks. It is important that you rest when needed. If you experience an increase in pain, run a fever or notice any signs of infection in your incision area, such as pus or increased swelling, notify your physician. If you have drains, they will be removed when the amount of drainage is below a certain level or at a designated time by your surgeon. This time may vary. It is not unusual for some patients to have their drains for several weeks.

Non-dissolvable stitches and staples require surgical removal; and will be removed in approximately one week. Steri-Strips™ fall off naturally and skin glue gradually loosens. The Steri- Strips™ or skin glue may leave residual residue on your skin. After four weeks, you may apply coconut oil or baby oil to help remove any remaining glue.