

MASTECTOMY

PRIOR TO YOUR SURGERY, YOU WILL BE SEEN THROUGH PREADMIT. THERE, THEY WILL TAKE YOUR MEDICAL HISTORY, AND DO TESTS, IE BLOODWORK, CHEST XRAY, AND ABDOMINAL ULTRASOUND. YOU WILL BE GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR UPCOMING SURGERY.

I FIND THE CD TO BE A WONDERFUL AID. THE NIGHT BEFORE, IT WILL BE HARD TO SLEEP. SHORTTERM ANTI- ANXIETY MEDS, IE CLONAZEPAM, CAN BE VERY HELPFUL. YOU NEED TO AVOID ALCOHOL 24 HRS BEFORE SURGERY AND 24 HOURS AFTER.

THE DAY BEFORE SURGERY, ENDEAVOR TO STAY WELL HYDRATED.

ON THE DAY OF SURGERY, YOU WILL BE ADMITTED TO DAY SURGERY, WHERE YOU WILL HAVE AN INTRAVENOUS LINE PLACED, NORMALLY IN A VEIN ON THE BACK OF YOUR HAND, AND IF ORDERED, YOU WILL GO FOR THE SENTINEL LYMPH NODE BIOPSY (SLNDBX).

THE SENTINEL LYMPH NODE TEST IS NOW THE STANDARD OF CARE IN MANY HOSPITALS, WHERE BREAST SURGERY IS DONE. YEARS AGO, BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THIS TEST, PATIENTS WITH BREAST CANCER HAD A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLING OF THE LYMPH NODES, UNDER THE ARMPIT (ON THE SAME SIDE AS THE BREAST CANCER), REMOVED AND TESTED FOR CANCER. ONE OF THE MAIN PROGNOSTIC INDICATOR OF HOW WELL A PERSON WILL DO WITH BREAST CANCER, RESTS WITH THE STATUS OF THE LYMPH NODES. BUT, HAVING THE LYMPH NODES REMOVED UNDER THE ARMPIT IS NOT ONLY PAINFUL, BUT ALSO CAN RESULT - ESPECIALLY IF THE ADDED INSULT OF RADIATION TO THE ARMPIT OR AXILLA IS DONE, IN A PERMANENT, DEBILITATING CONDITION CALLED LYMPHEDEMA. THIS IS WHERE THE ARM ON THE SIDE WHERE THE LYMPH NODES ARE REMOVED, CAN BECOME LARGE, SWOLLEN, AND HEAVY. THIS PROBLEM CAN BE DEALT WITH, USING A SPECIALIZED FORM OF MASSAGE THERAPY, CALLED MANUAL LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE, AND AFTER THAT, THE USE OF A SLEEVE, THAT IS WORN DAY AND NIGHT. NOW, WITH THE USE OF THE SENTINEL LYMPH NODE BIOPSY, A SMALL RADIOACTIVE TRACER LIQUID IS INJECTED AT THE AREOLA, ON THE SIDE OF THE BREAST CANCER, AT THE 12 O'CLOCK, 3 O'CLOCK, 6 O'CLOCK, AND 9 O'CLOCK POSITION. THERE IS A FREEZING CREAM PUT ON THE AREOLA,

WHICH DULLS THE PAIN, BUT IT WILL BE BRIEF, BUT QUITE UNCOMFORTABLE, FOR ABOUT 60 SECONDS. THEN, DURING YOUR SURGERY, USING A GEIGER COUNTER DEVICE, THE FIRST NODE THAT THE DYE DRAINS TO, CALLED THE SENTINEL LYMPH NODE, IS REMOVED. YOU WILL NOT HAVE RESULTS UNTIL AT LEAST 2 WEEKS AFTER YOUR SURGERY. IF THERE IS NO CANCER IN THE SENTINEL LYMPH NODE, YOU DO NOT NEED FURTHER SURGERY IN THE AXILLA. IF, HOWEVER, CANCER IS FOUND IN THE SENTINEL LYMPH NODE, YOU WILL NEED TO RETURN TO SURGERY, FOR WHAT IS CALLED AN AXILLARY LYMPH NODE DISSECTION, WHERE MYRIAD LYMPH NODES IN THAT SAME AXILLA ARE REMOVED.

THE SURGERY WILL BE APPROXIMATELY 2 HRS, WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE A LUMPECTOMY, OR MASTECTOMY.

THEN, YOU WILL GO TO POSTOP, WHERE YOU WILL STAY FROM 1-2 HOURS, GENERALLY. HERE, YOU WILL WAKE FROM SURGERY, BE ASSESSED WITH RESPECT TO BLOOD PRESSURE, BLEEDING, ETC. IF YOU ARE WELL ENOUGH TO HAVE A DRINK OF FLUID, NOT IN PAIN, AND BREATHING WELL, YOU WILL THEN RETURN TO DAY SURGERY, WHERE YOU FIRST BEGAN. AFTER AN HOUR OR SO, AND IF YOU ARE WELL ENOUGH, YOU WILL DISCHARGED HOME.

FOR THAT FIRST NIGHT, YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN, WITH YOUR LOVED ONES, AT HOME. NURSING WILL COME IN THE NEXT DAY. THIS IS SET UP BY THE HOSPITAL, AND IS FREE. NOW, THE NEW STANDARD SEEMS THAT YOU WILL HAVE 1 NURSING VISIT, ONLY IF YOU HAVE A DRAIN, IE FROM MASTECTOMY SURGERY AND/OR IF YOU HAVE SURGERY UNDER THE ARMPIT REQUIRING A DRAIN. IF YOU HAVE A LUMPECTOMY, AND NO SURGERY UNDER THE ARM, YOU WILL HAVE NO NURSING VISIT. YOU WILL THEN SEE YOUR SURGEON IN APPROXIMATELY 2-3 WEEKS, FOR RESULTS OF YOUR PATHOLOGY AND TO ASSESS THE INCISION SITE.

IF YOU HAVE A MASTECTOMY, YOU WILL HAVE A DRAIN IN PLACE. YOU MAY WISH TO GO TO MY WEBSITE, WHERE I GO INTO DETAIL ABOUT DRAIN CARE. THIS IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THE VISITING NURSE WILL COME ONCE THE DAY AFTER YOUR SURGERY, AND SHOW YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES HOW TO EMPTY THE DRAIN, WHICH MUST BE DONE DAILY. WHEN THE AMOUNT DECREASES TO 30CC OR LESS THAN 1 OUNCE IN A 24 HOUR PERIOD, THE NURSE WILL RETURN

TO YOUR HOME, OR HAVE YOU COME TO A NURSING CENTRE, AND SHE WILL REMOVE THE DRAIN. THE REMOVAL FEELS ODD, BUT IS PAINFUL.

IF YOU HAVE A DRAIN, THE DRAINAGE AT THE BEGINNING WILL BE BLOODY. THAT IS NORMAL. THERE MAY BE SOME AIR SPOTS IN THE DRAIN, OR YOU MAY SEE SOME CLOTS WHEN YOU DRAIN THE HEMOVAC PUMP. THIS IS ALSO NORMAL. THE FLUID DRAINS FROM THE INCISION SITE TO THE DRAIN BAG, ONLY ONE WAY. IT CANNOT GO BACK UP INTO YOUR SYSTEM. THE DRAINAGE IS PAINLESS AND CANNOT BE HEARD. AS TIME GOES ON, THE DRAINAGE MAY BECOME WHAT WE CALL SEROUS, OR MORE YELLOWISH.

NORMALLY, BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT IN EVERY PERSON, THE DRAIN WILL STAY IN PLACE FROM 7-10 DAYS. IT MAY BE LONGER THAN THAT IN PATIENTS WHO REQUIRE CHEMO OR RADIATION FIRST, FOLLOWED AT A LATER DATE BY MASTECTOMY.

WHILE THE DRAIN IS IN PLACE, YOU CANNOT GET THE AREA OF THE DRAIN OR INCISION WET. IT IS WHAT I CALL "WASHING TOPS AND TAILS" ONLY.

IN LONDON ONTARIO, THE NURSE WILL ONLY VISIT ONCE, 24 HRS AFTER YOU LEAVE HOSPITAL. SHE WILL TEACH YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONE HOW TO EMPTY THE DRAIN, MEASURE THE AMOUNT OF DRAINAGE, WRITE THAT NUMBER DOWN, AND THEN DISCARD THE DRAINAGE FLUID INTO THE TOILET. WHEN THE AMOUNT OF FLUID DISCHARGE IS LESS THAN 30CC OR 1 OUNCE IN A 24 HR PERIOD, THE NURSE WILL COME A SECOND TIME AND REMOVE THE DRAIN. WHILE THIS PROCESS IS NOT PAINFUL, IT DOES FEEL ODD. THEN, A SMALL BANDAGE WILL BE APPLIED TO THE SMALL DRAIN HOLE, AND IT WILL CLOSE IN 24 HRS. THEN YOU CAN BE FREE TO BATHE AT WILL.

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN FADING THEIR SCAR, IF THAT IS AN ISSUE FOR THEM, THERE IS A WONDERFUL PRODUCT I WILL NOW DISCUSS. IT IS CALLED MEPIFORM, AND IS A PRODUCT OF MOLNYLKE, A WOUND CARE COMPANY. THIS BANDAGE IS MADE OF SILICONE. WHILE IT WILL STICK TO THE SKIN, IT CAN BE EASILY REMOVED WITHOUT ANY PULLING OR TEARING OF THE SKIN. IT IS MEANT TO BE CUT TO FIT, AND APPLIED TO YOUR MASTECTOMY OR LUMPECTOMY SCAR, AND KEPT IN PLACE FOR UP TO 3 WEEKS AT A TIME. YOU CAN BATHE WITH IT ON. IT WILL NOT FALL OFF. AFTER 3 WEEKS, IT IS REMOVED, AND ANOTHER

FRESH BANDAGE APPLIED. THE TIME PERIOD FOR SCAR FADING IS USUALLY 2-3 MONTHS. THE RESULTS ARE VERY DRAMATIC, WITH AMAZING FADING OF THE SCAR.