



## After Surgery Concerns

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/AfterSurgery>

### General guidelines for after breast cancer surgery.

Side effects from surgery are not uncommon and vary from person to person based on the location of the cancer and surgery type. Relieving surgery side effects is an important part of your care and treatment. Maintaining a healthy diet, drinking water, along with plenty of rest and self-care after your surgery are things you can do to help assist in your recovery.

### Rest and focus on healing!

Resting after your surgery is very important for healing. Trying to do too much will slow the healing process and may worsen any side effects you are experiencing. Ask your surgeon when it will be safe for you to resume normal daily activities such as vacuuming, laundry or walking your dog.

Keeping your incision clean and dry is also important. This will help to minimize the risk of an infection and promote the healing process.

If there are concerns or questions about side effects after surgery, contact your health care team.

Always follow your surgeon's specific instructions for care after your surgery.

### Talk with your health care team about:

- Any side effects from surgery you may have concerns about. This includes any new or unexpected side effects, especially if they get worse.
- When it will be safe for you to return to:
  - normal daily activities, doing too much too soon may slow healing
  - upper body strenuous activities such as heavy lifting, vacuuming, lifting up small children, driving
  - exercising

### Common side effects of cancer surgery

**Pain.** It is not unusual to have pain or discomfort after surgery. Pain after surgery lessens gradually as the body heals. Your doctor may give you pain medications to decrease your discomfort. Take medications as prescribed.

**Fatigue.** Many people feel tired after major surgery, especially when it involves the abdomen or chest. Fatigue usually goes away gradually; activity should increase as tolerated.

**Swelling around the site of surgery.** The body's natural response after surgery is inflammation and swelling. If you are concerned about the swelling or redness, contact your healthcare provider. Sending a picture may be useful as well.

**Appetite loss.** General anesthesia may reduce your appetite. Most people regain their appetite shortly after surgery. Choose a healthy diet and resume your normal diet as tolerated.

**Drainage from the site of surgery.** Sometimes the fluid that builds up at the surgery site drain through the surgical wound. Signs of infection may include fever, redness around the wound or odorous drainage from the wound. If you develop signs of an infection, contact your surgeon's office.

**Bruising around the site of surgery.** After any surgical procedure, some blood may leak from small blood vessels under the skin. This can cause bruising, which is a common occurrence after surgery.

**Numbness.** It is not uncommon to experience slight numbness at the incision site. This is because the nerves in the skin are disrupted during surgery. Numbness is temporary and not concerning. If you are concerned, contact your surgeon.

Content adapted from websites below.

### Resources for Additional Information:

- [Cancer.Net, Side Effects of Surgery](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Recovering from Cancer](#)
- [NIH, NCI Surgery to Treat Cancer](#)

### Información Española

- [Cancer.Net, Efectos secundarios de la cirugía](#)
- [NIH, Cirugía para tratar el cáncer](#)