

We know that facing surgery can be overwhelming, so we've put together this checklist of practical ways in which you can prepare for your post-surgery recovery. See our separate checklists [What to Pack for your Surgery](#) and [Pre-operation Checklist](#) for additional advice about having surgery.

The information and content provided here is intended for information and educational purposes only. It is not an exhaustive list of points to think about at this stage of your treatment and it is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice. Please speak to your medical team about any queries in relation to your personal situation.



HELPING YOU THROUGH & BEYOND BREAST CANCER

PREPARING FOR RECOVERY AFTER SURGERY



NOBODY SHOULD FACE BREAST CANCER ALONE

Future Dreams Breast Cancer Charity provides practical and emotional support for those diagnosed with breast cancer, promotes breast health awareness and funds vital secondary breast cancer research.

At Future Dreams House you will discover an open, inclusive and safe space where you can be yourself, access the practical support you need and benefit from peer support from the point of diagnosis, throughout your treatment and beyond.

For details on all our in-person and virtual services please go to [futuredreams.org.uk](https://www.futuredreams.org.uk)

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Registered charity number in England and Wales: 1123526



PREPARING FOR RECOVERY AFTER SURGERY

○ STOCK UP ON TOILETRIES AND MEDICATION

Make sure you have sufficient toiletries, medication and prescription medications for during your hospital stay and the recovery period at home. You could also organise your ongoing medication to be delivered by your local chemist.

○ DRAIN BAGS

For node clearance and a mastectomy you'll need one or two drain bags depending on whether you are having surgery on one or two sides. You may have something at home – such as a lightweight tote bag – which will do the job just as well as a special drain bag.

○ A MASTECTOMY PILLOW

These pillows are used after breast surgery to help support and protect the tender chest area. They help by fitting under the arm when doing everyday tasks such as sitting, sleeping, watching TV and when in the car.

○ SMALL, SOFT, SQUIDGY CUSHION OR PILLOW

You'll need something that you can put under your arm after lymph node clearance surgery.

○ EXTRA PILLOWS TO HELP NIGHT TIME SLEEPING

Plan how you will sleep at night when you get home from hospital. You may find that a "cheese wedge" pillow or a body shaped pillow might help support you at night.

○ STOCK UP ON STRAWS

When your movement is limited, it's a lot easier to drink from a cup with a straw than reach for the cup and hold it up to your mouth. You'll need to take these to hospital and have them at home afterwards.

○ FLANNELS OR SPONGES

These can help with body washes when you can't have a shower or bath after surgery. Wet wipes are also really handy.

○ COMFY CLOTHES FOR RECOVERING AT HOME

You'll need soft, comfy clothing that can accommodate the tubes and drains coming out of your armpit/chest and clothes that you can put on without having to move your arm(s). Front fastening tops and loose pull-on trousers work well.

○ POST-SURGERY COMPRESSION SOCKS

Ask your hospital if they will be providing you with compression socks for once you are out of surgery. If not, then it is worth getting a pair to wear for a couple of weeks after surgery whilst you are recovering. Having two pairs is helpful.

○ INVEST IN A GOOD THERMOMETER

This will be invaluable if you're feeling unwell post-surgery (and you'll need it if you're also having chemotherapy).

○ A LITTER PICKER

One of those things to pick up something from the floor without having to bed down. These are invaluable for picking toys up from the floor if you have small children.

○ CONTACT NUMBERS

Make sure you record the number for who you need to call about any questions to do with the recovery and drain. Also have the emergency hospital number in your phone.

○ PREPARE THE HOUSE

You'll be out of action for a while after surgery so clean the house, change the bedsheets and wash the towels in advance of surgery day.

○ PREPARE MEALS IN ADVANCE

Make sure you do a grocery shop just before the surgery so you don't need to go food shopping for a while afterwards and make/freeze some meals that you can heat up. Soups and plain easy meals work well.

○ PLAN CHILDCARE

Is there someone who can help you with childcare while you're recovering from surgery? Is there someone who can take the children to and from school?

○ PREPARE A RECOVERY BASKET

Have a basket of useful items such as tissues, glasses, phone charger, pain killers, water bottle and so on. You can have a recovery basket beside your bed and another in your lounge.

○ PLAN HOW TO KEEP A RECORD OF YOUR MEDICATION

You'll be given pain medication so you'll need to keep a record of when you need to take it and then make a note of when you take it. There are phone apps that do this or you can use the notes function on your phone or a notebook and pen.

○ DOOR SIGN

When you're home from surgery it can help to have a sign on your front door explaining that you can't answer the door and ask them to call your mobile.

○ RECOVERY EXERCISES

You will be given exercises to do a few times every day to help improve your arm mobility. Make sure you know what you're doing and set a reminder to do them daily.

○ HELP GETTING TO AND FROM HOSPITAL

Can you ask someone to take you and bring you home from hospital as you will be unable to drive (remember to ask your breast consultant when you are likely to be driving again).



Visit futuredreams.org.uk/information-hub for further practical tips, expert advice, personal stories and signposts to further information for people impacted by breast cancer, provided by people impacted by breast cancer.