

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION INFORMATION

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION (IMMEDIATE) WITH TISSUE EXPANDER PROCEDURE INSTRUCTION SHEET

This protocol applies to patients who select the most common technique of Tissue Expansion Breast Reconstruction. For alternative procedures, Dr. Papalian will describe your treatment course based on your particular findings and procedure selected.

Breast Reconstruction with Tissue Expanders, requires **two separate** procedures as described below.

PRIOR TO YOUR INITIAL BREAST RECONSTRUCTION PROCEDURE

- Initially, you will have a comprehensive consultation with Dr. Papalian, to select the appropriate procedure for you. If you select, Immediate Breast Reconstruction with a tissue expander, your procedure will be coordinated with your General Surgeon.
- Prior to your procedure, you will have your “Pre Op” visit with Dr. Papalian generally 2 weeks before to your surgery.
- At that time, your medical condition will be reviewed and any preoperative testing evaluated.
- You will be given clear information on what to expect before, during and after surgery.
- You will be provided with a prescription for your postoperative medications. It is recommended that you have the prescriptions filled at your local pharmacy and ready at home prior to your surgery
- Smoking before surgery will always increase your risk, however it is imperative that you refrain from smoking for 6 weeks prior to your procedure.
- Avoidance of Aspirin and Aspirin containing products is strictly prohibited for 14 days before surgery.
- It is recommended that you avoid alcohol for 48 hours pre operatively.
- “Herbal remedies” and “herbal supplements” are to be avoided for 14 days preoperatively.

MICHAEL M. PAPALIAN, MD

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- You will be given instructions by Dr. Papalian, on which of your prescription medications you should continue to take before your surgery at the time of your Pre-Op visit.
- Nausea after surgery is not an uncommon finding. Dr Papalian finds that if you eat a light, low residue, low volume diet for the entire day prior to surgery, patients often have fewer issues with nausea.
- Hydration however is important. Drink plenty of water.
- The night prior to surgery, **after midnight**, it is important that you DO NOT EAT OR DRINK ANYTHING, including water.
- You will need to ensure that you have proper help at home after surgery. It is always recommended that you have someone with you for the first night after surgery.
- You will need to arrange for your transportation to and from the hospital and for your first postoperative visit, as it is recommended that you not drive to the first visit.
- Surgery, while anxiety provoking, should be a controlled fulfilling experience. You will be provided with all the information needed to ensure you are prepared and “ready” for your procedure.
- Dr Papalian will guide you “each step of the way” and ensure that you are comfortable with your progress
- You should ask questions and feel free to contact the office if you need any information.
- At the time of your pre-op visit, you will be given information regarding proper bras for after surgery.

YOUR INITIAL PROCEDURE

- Your initial procedure is a combined procedure with your General Surgeon. Immediately following your Mastectomy, Dr. Papalian performs an insertion of a Tissue Expander under your chest muscle. During the Mastectomy procedure Dr. Papalian works with your General Surgeon to ensure appropriate availability of skin for the reconstruction.
- Typically during your initial surgery, the Tissue Expander is partially filled with Saline solution (“salt water”) so patients awake from surgery with a partial breast mound.
- Your initial procedure is performed under **General Anesthesia at Sequoia Hospital**

THE PLASTIC SURGERY CENTER ON WOODSIDE

2055 Woodside Road, Suite 150

Redwood City, CA 94061

Ph 650-364-6060 Fax 650-364-9405

contact@drpapalian.com

MICHAEL M. PAPALIAN, MD

Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery

www.DrPapalian.com

- Most patients **stay overnight** and are able to return home the day after surgery.
- The Tissue Expander is subsequently filled during office visits until the appropriate size is reached.
- If, together with Dr Papalian, it is determined that a procedure is required on your opposite breast for symmetry purposes, this procedure may possibly be performed at the time of your initial procedure. These decisions are made well in advance with you at the time of your initial consultation and pre-op visit.

YOUR INITIAL TISSUE EXPANDER PROCEDURE DAY

- **After midnight** the night before your initial procedure, it is important that you **DO NOT TO EAT OR DRINK** anything, including water.
- It is best to wear clothes that are easy to slip on. A top that is either a front zipper or button is recommended
- Your procedure will be performed at Sequoia Hospital. You will be asked to arrive at the Hospital 1 ½ hours prior to your procedure and go **DIRECTLY** to the Short Stay Unit, where your initial preparation will take place.
- Your procedure will be performed under General Anesthesia.
- After your procedure, you will spend time recovering in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (Recovery Room) and then be transferred to your Hospital room.
- After surgery you will be placed into your surgical bra and elastic wraps around your chest.
- With Breast Reconstruction, “drains” are utilized. You will be given proper instructions regarding drain care the morning after surgery by Dr. Papalian.
- Most patients are ready to be discharged from the hospital the day following surgery.
- You will need transportation home from the hospital.

RECOVERY FOLLOWING YOUR INITIAL TISSUE EXPANDER PROCEDURE.

- You will be seen on the first postoperative day in the Hospital by Dr. Papalian and most patients are able to be discharged following the post operative visit.

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- Your elastic dressings will be removed and you will only require a surgical bra as a dressing. No other bandages are necessary. You will be asked to wear your surgical bra 24 hours/day, except for showering, until your sutures are removed.
- You will be able to shower when you get home. Baths, hot tubs and saunas are not allowed until after your sutures are removed
- It will be necessary to empty and record the drainage from your drains. This will be clearly described to you personally by Dr. Papalian as well as the nursing staff before discharge from the Hospital.
- Discomfort following surgery is commonly minimal to moderate, and most often described as “soreness.” The discomfort is typically alleviated with the pain medication prescribed. Most patients will say that while it did feel like “an operation”, the discomfort was not as great as they might have thought.
- Swelling is typically minimal and will typically peak on Day 3 after surgery and then begin to resolve. Bruising, while not common, if present resolves typically in 7-10 days.
- Sutures, placed under the skin to prevent “stitch marks”, will be removed typically in 14 –21 days.
- Drains are removed by Dr. Papalian in the office. Removal is typically in 10-14 days, depending upon drainage volume.
- Most patients return to work in 3-4 weeks.
- “Arm Exercises”, which will be described, are started after your initial post-operative office visit with Dr. Papalian, typically 3-5 days after your initial procedure.
- Regular exercise can be resumed in 21 days.
- Tissue Expansion is performed in the office during your regularly scheduled post-operative visits. A small needle is inserted into a valve under your skin, which is part of the expander, which allows for the addition of Saline solution. The number of expansions required varies from patient to patient, depending upon the size of the opposite breast.
- You will continue to see improvement in your breast for weeks after surgery, as the reconstruction will continue to improve the shape as the tissues soften.

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AFTER YOUR INITIAL PROCEDURE.

- After your initial healing, once sutures and drains are removed, you will undergo any additional treatment(s), such as chemotherapy, if necessary.
- During this period, Dr Papalian will continue to follow you on a regular basis to ensure proper healing of the initial phase of your reconstruction.
- The timing of these treatments varies typically from 3-6 months.
- You will require a second procedure as part of your reconstruction, which takes place a minimum of 6 weeks after these treatments are completed, if necessary.
- If no post-operative additional treatments are required, the minimum time for your Second Stage of the reconstruction is 3 months.
- It is important to know that the timing for your second procedure is elective and up to you, based upon your personal schedule.
- Generally Dr. Papalian recommends completion of the reconstruction within one year.

YOUR SECOND STAGE OF BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

- The Second Stage of the reconstruction involves Removing the Tissue Expander, making any adjustments in position, size and shape of the breast mound. The Tissue Expander is replaced with reconstructive breast prosthesis (Implant).
- Any adjustments to the opposite breast are done as well.
- The Nipple is reconstructed at the same time, typically utilizing local breast skin, with a skin folding technique, that does not require any grafting from other body areas.
- The Second Stage Breast Reconstruction procedure is performed either at **Sequoia Hospital or at the Plastic Surgery Center in Palo Alto (Out-Patients).**
- The procedure is performed under **General Anesthesia**
- The procedure is typically performed as an outpatient.
- Patients will have options in terms of breast implant choice as the Second Stage approaches. These decisions are made over time, together with Dr. Papalian.

BREAST IMPLANT CHOICES

- As your Second Stage Breast Reconstruction procedure approaches, you will have the option of either a Saline or Silicone breast implant. There are advantages and disadvantages of each prosthesis, and these will be reviewed with you together with Dr. Papalian. You will be provided with written information, which is also available on this website regarding the safety of silicone implants.

RECOVERY FOLLOWING YOUR SECOND STAGE BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

- Recovery following your Second Stage Reconstruction is rapid.
- Patients are able to shower the day following surgery.
- Typically patients do not require significant time off work ranging from 2-3 days to 2 weeks.
- Patients are able to resume normal activities within a few days.
- Drains are typically not required.
- Patients are asked to wear the surgical bra 24 hours/ day for 2 weeks following surgery.

NIPPLE AREOLAR TATTOOING

- Following completion of the breast reconstruction and nipple reconstruction, the final procedure involves tattooing of the nipple-areolar reconstruction to add color to the reconstructed nipple and areola. The tattooing procedure is performed in the office with local anesthesia.