

# Breast Reconstruction Second Stage (Step Two)

Information for  
Patients & Family

Expander Removal, Implant Placement  
and/or Nipple Reconstruction

Adapted from: Breast Reconstruction: Second Stage (Step Two):  
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## Follow-up appointment

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Contact your doctor's office to make an appointment for 10 to 14 days after your surgery.



**Call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department if you have any of the following:**

- ♦ bleeding that does not stop after pressing firmly on the area for 10 minutes
- ♦ chills and/or fever of 38.5°C (101°F) or higher
- ♦ increased pain or swelling of the breast
- ♦ nausea and vomiting that does not stop
- ♦ wound/breast redness or a pus-like (yellow or green) drainage
- ♦ other

## Clothing

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- ☐ Until your wounds heal, wear a stretch bra or sports bra that fits loosely.
- ☐ When the dressings are off, wear an underwire bra for three weeks.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Activity/Exercise

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You may do your normal exercise and activities after surgery but do not swim until the wounds have healed.



## Areola Tattoo

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About three months after the nipple is reconstructed, the areola is tattooed to create a circle around the nipple to match the other areola. After the tattooing is done, keep the dressing on for five days. You may shower while the dressing is in place. If the tattooed area is crusted when you remove the dressing, put polysporin ointment on the area twice a day to keep it moist. The tattoo may fade over time and need to be touched up.

## General Information

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Breast reconstruction usually has two to three steps.

**Step 1:** make a new breast mound

**Step 2:** remove expander, insert implant, and/or create a nipple

**Step 3:** colour (tattoo) an areolar (the circle around the nipple) a few months later

You are now at **Step Two**

In step two, the doctor makes the nipple from the reconstructed breast or sometimes from the other breast. At this time, the doctor may also:

- a) replace the expander with a permanent implant (after tissue expander reconstruction)
- b) smooth the wound line in the stomach area if necessary (after TRAM flap reconstruction)
- c) improve the shape of the breasts by removing fat (liposuction)

## Expander Removal and Implant Placement

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The expander is removed and the implant is placed under your chest muscle. You will have a general anesthetic. This surgery takes about one hour or it may take longer if a nipple is reconstructed. You may leave the hospital two to four hours after the surgery.

## Nipple Reconstruction

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You will have a general or local anesthetic. The surgery takes about one hour. If you have a general anesthetic, you may leave two to four hours after surgery and sooner after a local anesthetic. It will take a few weeks for the reconstructed nipple to heal.

## How do I care for the wound?

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Leave the dressings around the nipple for five days after the surgery. If you have other dressings on your breast or stomach, you may remove those four days after the surgery.

Leave the Steri-strips on until they fall off. Keep all dressings dry. If they become wet, replace them with clean dressings. These are available at any pharmacy.

If the wound(s) starts to bleed after you are home, press firmly on the area for a few minutes. If the bleeding does not stop after pressing for 10 minutes, call your surgeon or go to an emergency department.

There may be some bruising, tenderness, swelling, slight bleeding and scabbing around the wounds. These are normal signs and will improve over time. Put polysporin ointment on the wounds if scabbing occurs.

## Pain at home

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You will be given a prescription for pain medication. If the pain is mild to moderate, you may prefer to take plain or extra strength Tylenol. If you have pain, it is important to take the medication every four hours. But do not take more than the number of Tylenol recommended on the bottle.



The prescribed medication may cause constipation. If you become constipated, ask your pharmacist to recommend a mild laxative or stool softener. To prevent constipation, eat a high-fibre diet (fruits, grains, vegetables) and drink plenty of liquids.

## Bathing at home

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Avoid tub baths until the dressings are removed. You may shower after all the dressings are removed. After the dressings have been removed, keep the wounds clean by showering every day. Gently pat the wounds dry with a clean towel, **do not rub** the area.