



Tampa Bay Breast Care Specialists

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Complete Axillary Node Dissection

An axillary lymph node dissection is an inpatient surgical procedure that removes all the lymph tissue in your axilla (a.k.a. armpit). These lymph nodes are checked for malignancy. Here is some general information on how to prepare for your procedure and what to expect.

Preparing for surgery day:

- Make sure you have someone that can drive you home after surgery.
- Refrain from eating or drinking anything at least 12 hours before your surgery, unless otherwise specified by your doctor.
- We suggest wearing clothing that is loose and comfortable, as well as a sports bra or front closure bra.

What to expect after surgery:

- You should call the office and schedule a post-op visit for approximately one week after your surgery.
- We receive results typically between 3-5 business days after surgery. The doctor will go over your results at your post-op visit.
- Write down any questions you come up with so you can discuss them with your doctor during your post-op visit.
- During your post-op visit, the doctor will remove your drain. Before you come in, take a prescription pain pill to help ease any discomfort that might come from removing the drain.
- Pending on the type of surgery, you should be able to resume normal, non-strenuous activity the day after your surgery. You should wait until after you see your physician to make sure you can go back to aerobic or strength exercise.

About your wound:

- Skin glue is used to close your incision. If the area starts to bleed, you should reinforce the dressing with sterile gauze.
- You should be able to take a shower the day after surgery, but consult with your doctor or his staff to confirm.
- Try not to cause any trauma to the surgical site for at least one week after surgery.
- It is normal to have a small amount of bleeding, swelling and bruising at the site.
- You will have attached to you a plastic bulb that is connected to a plastic drain. This bulb collects any excess fluid from your wound.
- You will be instructed on how to take care of this drain. It is normal that some of the fluid going through the drain may leak where it is attached to you. Use some gauze to cover the area and give our staff a call to see if there is anything else you need to do.
- While your drain is in place, DO NOT drive. You may return to driving once your drain is removed.

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Complete Axillary Node Dissection continued

About your wound continued...

- When you have an axillary dissection, we recommend you not use this arm to get any blood drawn, IV sticks, or get your blood pressure taken.
- You may start normal activity and exercising the affected arm the day after surgery. You can do this by raising your arm straight up by your head so that it is grazing your ear. Try to do this once an hour for the next six weeks. You do not have to disrupt your sleep to do this exercise. This exercise helps with your range of motion.
- On most occasions, the only type of pain medication you need would be Tylenol, but the physician may prescribe you pain medication as well.
- If you decide to take prescription pain medication, you may add one regular-strength Tylenol. DO NOT exceed one Tylenol, since this is a popular prescription pain ingredient and we do not want you to overdose.
- Please be advised that taking prescription pain medications can alter your judgment and you should refrain from operating heavy machinery.

Authorization of Procedures and Billing

When we schedule your surgery, we will call your insurance company to verify coverage and get authorization. If we have any issue obtaining authorization, we will call you immediately. If you decide to pay out of pocket or if your insurance does not cover, our billing department will give you an estimation of how much your procedure will cost, as well as make payment arrangements. We are only responsible for the billing of the surgery our surgeon performs, so keep in mind that depending on the complexity of your situation, you may receive bills from the surgical facility where the surgery takes place, the radiologist, and the pathologist, just to name a few.

You should contact our office if you experience any of the following:

- You have a fever over 101.5 during the first week after surgery.
- Your wound feels tight and you are experiencing extreme pain.
- Your breast is extremely bruised other than around the surgical site.
- You are experiencing excessive nausea and/or vomiting.
- Blood continues to leak from your dressing. While you are trying to contact us, use a towel to hold firm pressure on your wound.

If your situation becomes a life-threatening or emergency situation, please call 911 or go straight to the Emergency Room. Please notify us so we may assist you and care for your needs.