

Mastectomy Before Surgery Tips

You have your surgery booked, surgeons picked and asked all your medical questions so here are some practical tips to help you **get prepared for your surgery**. Remember being organised and prepared will help you feel more in control of the situation.



Get Healthy



Telling Family,
Friends and Employers



Go Shopping



Set up a Medical
Folder



Organise your
House



Establish your
Support Team



Deal with Pre
Surgery Nerves



Photos and Journal



Get Healthy

- Do everything you can to get your body in the best physical shape possible to allow it to cope and recover from the surgery.
- Consider getting a blood test with your General Practitioner to check your iron, vitamin levels etc. and take supplements if required, and book in an appointment with your Chiropractor or Physiotherapist if you think they can help you.
- Stop smoking, stop/cut down drinking alcohol, lose weight, exercise and in particular improve your core strength - having a strong core helps so much getting in and out of bed when you can't use your arms to push or hold your weight.
- Use your BRCA/high risk status and decision to have a mastectomy as motivation.



Telling Family, Friends and Employers

Tell people in a way and time frame that works for you. Some people find it helpful to tell everyone early while others prefer to leave it closer to the surgery date. Tell groups of family and friends gradually – **perhaps start with those closest that you know will offer unconditional understanding**. Support is vital but months of well meaning questions and talking about the upcoming surgery can be emotionally wearing. **Be aware people will react differently** or not know how to act or support you. Making the decision to have the surgery is a huge one and often this is the most stressful and emotional time.



Go Shopping

You will need loose fitting clothes and button down/zipper down tops, tracksuit/ loose yoga pants and hospital supplies – refer to the **What to Pack for Hospital list**. When you get home lots of pillows are needed (minimum six) and some swear by a body pillow so make sure you have enough. You will find you need about four pillows behind you and one on each side to rest your arms.



Set up a Medical Folder

Have a folder for all your medical paperwork, such as reports, scans, bills, quotes, claim forms, hospital admission etc. Have a summary page of who has been paid, what **Medicare** and **Private Health Fund** claims have been sent and when the claims have been paid. Keep copies of everything that way if a claim isn't paid you can follow it up. A folder and records also helps to keep track of your medical expenses.



Organise your House

You aren't going to be able to do much for the first few weeks when you get home so:

- **Super clean your house** – floor mopping, vacuuming, bathroom scrubbing etc. (all these things you won't be able to do for a few weeks – try to stretch it out for months!).
- **Stock up on easy to prepare and healthy food** – make sure your pantry is full and only needs topping up/fresh food to be bought

- **Cook up food/buy meals for the freezer and stock up as much as you can** – it really helps not having to worry about preparing food (opening drawers, lifting pans and reaching into cupboards are too much in the first week or so). For those with children you may even want to prepare and freeze their lunches and recess treats.
- **Rearrange your cupboards** (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom) as you will not be able to reach up high so put all the essential/common use items on lower shelves.
- Pay all your bills and put petrol in your car/s.
- Set up childcare and ensure all school notes are signed.
- **Write up a contact list of family and friends and what they are able to help out with for the person looking after your family while you are in hospital** – this way they will have a number to call and person to contact regarding picking and dropping of children to school and sporting activities etc.
- Prepare for any social events, for example buy and wrap birthday/Christmas presents.
- **Organise for someone to drive you to appointments**, drive your children to school and after school activities. You won't be able to drive until your Doctor gives approval (usually four weeks after surgery).
- **Book in paid for help** (eg. a weekly house cleaner) or do a chart for your family and friends with all the tasks (eg. driving, laundry, grocery shopping, ironing, cleaning, cooking) divided up so that everyone knows what they are doing to help out.



Establish Your Support Team

Determine who needs to be on your team – who in your family, which of your friends and services like Pink Hope. Make sure all team members are informed and ready to support you. People can't help you if you don't let them know what is going on in your life.



Deal with Pre Surgery Nerves

It is pretty normal to feel pre surgery nerves and natural to have doubts and fear. **Focussing on why you made the decision and the relief you will feel when the surgery is over helps.** Remember waiting is the hardest part. Treat yourself to a massage, spiritual/healing energy treatment (eg. reiki), beauty treatments (waxing, eyelash tinting, etc.), hair treatment (definitely wash your hair before going into hospital as it will be quite a few days before you can shower/wash your hair), farewell bye bye boob party, breast cast, lunch with your partner or girlfriend, whatever makes you feel pampered and helps you relax.



Photos and Journal

You may not think you want to take photos of your breasts prior to surgery but many women find it helps to have pictures of their breasts. It is useful if you want a similar size and shape when choosing implants and also for nipple colour if you require tattooing. On an emotional level some find it helpful to have 'before' photos and it is a way to say goodbye. Taking photos and keeping a journal throughout the surgery and recovery process allows you to look back and see how far you have come and what you have achieved.