



Useful tips for going into hospital for prophylactic mastectomy

Hospital

- Several pairs of buttoned up pyjamas (easy access to check dressings).
- Slippers (easy to slip on).
- Dressing gown for when you are up and about.
- Hair bands (if hair is long) to tie back in theatre – make sure NO metal is present on band.
- Take rings off as fingers may well swell with drip in post-surgery – don't leave jewellery at hospital
- Comfy clothes to travel home in – ie, tracksuit bottoms and baggy tee-shirt or front-opening top – will be sore stretching arms up to put on a tight top. Also a cushion/small pillow to place in between you and car seatbelt.
- Soft crop top (ie, Sloggi – no seams and very soft against skin) if unable to wear/don't want to wear a bra. Ask your Clinical Nurse Specialist for advice.
- Baby wipes for wiping off surgical pen/solutions after surgery. Also quick way of freshening up without leaving bed if not able to.
- Cartons of drink, ie, apple juice (good fibre) and a bottle of squash and a sports bottle.
- Snacks – you may get bored of hospital food, ie, dry biscuits, crackers, digestives, cereal biscuits, mints, etc.
- The usual toiletries – nice to have your own hand towel, flannel, toothbrush and paste, Vaseline for dry lips, face cream, hairbrush, roll-on deodorant and a little perfume if you feel like wearing it.
- Mobile & Charger – lovely to receive texts off friends and family even if you don't feel like replying.
- Try and get up as soon as you can – keep wriggling and flexing your feet in bed as this will help prevent the possibility of a deep vein thrombosis.
- Don't be scared to ask for more pain relief if you need it – don't suffer unnecessarily.
- Take trashy magazines in to read, nothing too serious. You may not want to read but may want to glance at them if you are bored.

- Download audio-books and some TV on I Player to watch. Remember to take headphones.
- Take an M&S gift card in if an M&S at the hospital to buy treats for yourself (instead of cash).
- Take a photo of your children/family in to make you smile and look forward to getting home (if it doesn't upset you).

At Home

- Wear support stockings that the hospital should give you – white post-surgery stockings which help prevent clots – check how long you should wear them for (I wore mine for a couple of weeks – ask for a couple of pairs so you can have one clean pair and one pair on).
- Comfy clothes.
- When sitting, try and put your feet up and keep wriggling those feet when you think about it.
- Ask a friend/partner to help wash your hair as it may be uncomfortable stretching up to wash and dry it (trip to hairdresser's for a treat just to get it washed and dried when you feel up to it).
- Use online shopping, if possible, quick and easy and delivered to the door – make sure someone is at home to put food away for you.
- Don't invite too many visitors straight away – you will just be glad to get home to the family/friends and will want some time with them.
- If anyone asks if they can help, say 'yes'. Difficult to do, but take them up on offers, ie, cleaning the bathroom, changing beds, ironing school uniform or hoovering – things you should not do for a while.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Get up and walk around a little and often – keep circulation going.
- Don't worry about the state of the house – there will be plenty of time to sort it out later on.
- Keep meals simple, nothing fancy, easy and quick for partner or friends to cook – good to plan a menu for the first couple of weeks and to stock up the freezer.
- Aim for a goal in a realistic time period – meeting up for a coffee with a friend or two in town – something to strive for and look forward to later on.
- Keep on top of any pain – check which pain killers to use as there is no point in suffering – you don't want the children to see you uncomfortable.
- Look forward to a happy and healthy future – a lovely summer holiday.
- Have plenty of rest and take a nap when the children are at nursery/school if you need it – your body will be repairing itself and you need to rest.

- Make sure you have the Clinical Nurse Specialist's number in your phone so you always have a point of contact when you get home. They will redirect you to the right people if necessary. Call them to check any worries out, don't just sit there worrying.
- Do any exercises the hospital tell you to do, usually the Physio comes to see you quite soon after the op to show you what to do – keep them up at home.
- You will need help unscrewing things, ie, jam jars, coffee jars so make sure people are around to undo these for you as twisting can pull on your scars.