



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 – NO METAL on band.
- Take rings off as fingers may swell with drip in post-surgery – leave jewellery at home.
- 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), bottle of squash, sports bottle.
- Snacks – you may get bored of hospital food, ie, dry biscuits, crackers, digestives, cereal bars, fruit, 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.
- 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 or green 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, baggy clothes.
- When sitting, try and put your feet up and keep wriggling your feet.
- 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 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.
- 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.
- Have plenty of rest and take a nap 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 may 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.