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Post Operative Instructions
Sentinel Node Biopsy

Surgery:

You have just undergone surgery to remove one or more lymph nodes in order to better stage your disease.

This involves making an incision in your armpit or groin in order to remove the appropriate lymph nodes.

Pain:

Upon discharge from the hospital, you will be given a prescription for pain medication. Because pain medication can be constipating, be sure to drink lots of fluids and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. It will also be helpful to take a stool softener such as Colace or Metamucil, once or twice a day.

If you are unable to have a bowel movement following surgery, a mild laxative such as Dulcolax or Colace may be used. Being up and about after surgery is also helpful in regulating bowel function.

Incision:

Your incision is closed using a number of sutures below the skin surface. When you remove the outer dressing (see bathing instructions below for when to remove the dressing), you will find a special ribbed tape covering the incision.

You may find that your incision is swollen following surgery and could have some discoloration. This swelling and discoloration is normal and will resolve over the next several weeks to months.

Many patients experience areas of numbness around the incision as a result of handling the sensory nerve to the armpit or groin during surgery. This too will resolve with time.

Medication:

Pain medication should be taken as needed the first couple of days after surgery. Anesthesia will wear off approximately 2-6 hours after surgery.

Bathing:

You are asked to keep the outer dressing over the incision dry and in place for one day and in place for one day following surgery. You can replace the dressing as needed for cleanliness. Be careful not to scrub at the incision line, simply let the water run over the incision and gently pat the area dry.

Activity:

Following surgery, you are encouraged to do as much walking as is comfortable.

You are not to operate a vehicle while you are having discomfort or taking pain medication. This will interfere with you driving safely. Your surgeon will tell you when it is safe to resume driving.

Symptoms to Report:

Temperature over 101 degrees

Drainage or increasing redness at the incision

Persistent pain unrelieved by medication

Active bleeding (some discoloration and swelling is normal)

Follow-up Post Op Appointment:

We will see you one week after surgery. The final pathology report should be available within 3-5 working days and you will be contacted as soon as they are available. If you do not already have a post-op appointment please call our office at 650-641-7861 to schedule one during regular working hours.