



SMITA R. RAMANADHAM, M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

PAP Flap Breast Reconstruction

Patient Care Instructions

General Information

Breast reconstruction using your own body's tissue from your thigh with a PAP flap has the advantage of forming a natural appearing and feeling breast. The upper inner and posterior thigh tissue is removed with its blood vessels and transplanted to the chest vessels to assume a new role as living tissue under the breast skin. The blood vessels and tissue are fragile and can be injured very easily. Dr. Ramanadham promotes the healing of the free flap with close observation for the first 72 hours. This is usually in the ICU. The flap is monitored with a Doppler ultrasound, which detects a pulse and blood flow within the flap. Most patients will be hospitalized from three to five days but this varies for the individual patient. Despite the increased complexity of the procedure the increased length of recovery, Dr. Ramanadham strives to make this breast reconstruction method a reliable option with a predictable recovery.

Things to handle prior to your surgery

Avoid all NSAIDs (motrin, aspirin, ibuprofen, etc) for 7-10 days prior to procedure unless otherwise directed by your doctor. Continued use may cause bleeding.

Avoid all herbal medicine or supplements for 3 weeks prior to procedure. Continued use may cause bleeding.

Arrange for someone to drive you home from the hospital and stay with you for at least 2 to 3 days.

Necessary medications will be called into your pharmacy or given to you on discharge. These should be picked up prior to surgery.

Protein supplementation can be started one to two weeks before surgery and should include over 20 grams of additional protein daily.

Have electrolyte containing fluids such as Gatorade or electrolyte water on hand.

Have stool softeners/laxatives on hand, such as Colace, Biscodyl, Milk of Magnesia. These can be purchased at your local pharmacy.

Review the attached list of medications not to take during the perioperative period. If you have any further questions that were not addressed during your consultation then please call our office.

If you are unsure if you can stop a medication then please call the prescribing provider to confirm if this is medically safe.

For your convenience, we have included a [Suggested Shopping List](#) in the addendum to these instructions



SMITA R. RAMANADHAM, M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

Pre-Operative Guidelines

Smoking should be stopped a minimum of 4 weeks prior to surgery. Smoking should be avoided for at least 4 weeks after surgery as well. Smoking can greatly interfere with healing and lead to postoperative complications.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. This includes no water, gum, or hard candy.

Blood pressure and/or heart medications can be taken with a sip of water as directed by your prescribing physician.

If you take medication for diabetes then confirm with your prescribing physician how to manage these medications prior to surgery.

If you are prone to nausea or motion sickness let your anesthesiologist know on the day of surgery. Medications can be started prior to surgery or during surgery to help improve your postoperative experience.

Post-Operative Care

Take pain medication as prescribed. Do not drink alcohol with these medications.

Continue Aspirin 81mg every day for a total of 4 weeks.

Take a suggested stool softener/laxative until bowels begin to function normally after surgery. A combination of anesthesia, muscle relaxants and pain medications usually make these necessary for a few days.

Do not smoke or be around smoking as even second hand smoke delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

Get plenty of rest.

A surgical bra is acceptable but avoid wearing any other bras or any compressive clothing on your chest.

Follow a well-balanced diet, which includes protein and is limited in salt intake. A high salt diet or meal, can lead to increased swelling and prolonged recovery. It is best to continue the protein supplementation for approximately 3 weeks after surgery.

Oral hydration should include the use of electrolyte containing fluids such as Gatorade or a low calorie substitute.

Limit the amount of caffeinated beverages as they can promote dehydration; however Dr. Ramanadham recommends you maintain your daily average of caffeine to avoid headaches.

Activity Restrictions

Walking is encouraged shortly after the operation and can be increased over the first 2 weeks. Light cardiovascular exercise can be resumed after 4 weeks with all activities to be resumed at 6 weeks.

Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 weeks.



SMITA R. RAMANADHAM, M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

Limit hip flexion and climbing stairs over the first 3 weeks. If stairs must be climbed do this with limited tension on the posterior thigh.

Do not drive for 7 to 10 days or until you are no longer taking oral pain medications or muscle relaxants and your posterior thigh is comfortable.

Do not run, lift weights, play tennis or golf for 6 weeks after surgery. It is important to keep your heart rate under 100 beats per minute for 4 weeks.

Heavy lifting/stretching (Yoga) can be resumed after 6 weeks.

Incision Care

You will have a clear skin glue dressing on incisions.

The glue will protect the incision for 3 weeks.

If you have persistent sutures, they will be removed in 7 to 14 days.

You may shower 2 days after the operation. Make sure someone is with you at your first shower.

You may gently begin washing your incisions with mild soap and water but do not submerge the incisions for at least 4 weeks.

Do not use a heating pad; heat may burn the area.

Do not wear a bra (other than a surgical bra) for at least 4 weeks or until instructed by Dr. Ramanadham as this can compress the flap and cause permanent injury to the tissue.

Drain Care

Dr. Ramanadham will place one or two small silicone tubes under the skin in the area of surgery (breast and thigh). These will be connected to a suction bulb. These drains help collect fluid, which can normally occur in the area of healing. You may have 2 to 6 drains total while in the hospital. They will each be removed when ready.

Care for the drains will be reviewed by the nurse on discharge.

Keep your drainage bulbs collapsed to create a mild suction. Record the time and amounts of drainage over a 24 hour period.

Generally, drains will remain until the daily drainage is 30 cc or less. A sheet is provided to you for recording these amounts.

What to Expect after Breast Reconstruction Surgery with a PAP Flap

The reconstructed breast will have moderate swelling which may look larger than the other side, especially if radiation therapy was performed on that side.

The reconstructed breast will have two different skin tones due to the use of thigh skin.



SMITA R. RAMANADHAM, M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

Moderate swelling of the thigh is expected. This will subside in 6 to 9 weeks.

It is common to have discomfort in the operative areas. Mild burning around the incisions after breast reconstruction surgery is normal, and will improve shortly after surgery.

You can expect some slight bloody oozing from the suture lines and swelling of the incisions. Gauze may be applied if it is bothersome. However, you should call the clinic if you have continuous bleeding, significantly more swelling on one side than the other, or any severe pain associated with swelling.

There may be a feeling of numbness of the posterior or medial thigh and breast that will subside with time. The reconstructed breast may regain some sensation over time.

Red discoloration of the incisions may occur if there is significant swelling, especially in the area of the sutures.

This will resolve when skin glue comes off and the incisions heal.

Constipation is common after any operation, and is secondary to the anesthetic, pain medication and dehydration.

Please stay well hydrated and use the recommended stool softener and/or laxative until bowels return to normal.

When to Call the Office

If you have increased swelling, firmness and/or color change of the reconstructed breast. In bilateral reconstructions, if one side is significantly different from the other. This may signify a change in the flap circulation which is serious and you should contact the clinic or Dr. Ramanadham.

If you have increased swelling and bruising of one thigh or the other. Remove any covering/dressing to make this determination. This may represent a hematoma (collection of blood) or a seroma (collection of clear fluid).

If you have significantly increased drain output over an 8 hour period of more than 150 cc.

If you have increasing redness or swelling around the incision.

If you have severe pain not relieved by pain medication.

If you have any side effects from the medication: rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.

If you have fever over 101.

If you have yellow or greenish drainage from an incision or notice a foul odor.

If you notice some vaginal burning and itching or severe diarrhea as a result of the antibiotics used during and after surgery.

For medical questions, please call our office.



SMITA R. RAMANADHAM, M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

Follow-up Care and Appointments

Drains will remain in the breasts and thighs until totals are 30cc or less for 24 hours for 2 consecutive days. You will need to measure drainage amounts and record these on the provided sheet. Bring this sheet with you to clinic.

You will be seen by Dr. Ramanadham approximately 1 week after discharge from the hospital. You will also be seen at 3 weeks, 8 weeks and 3 months. This may vary.

Suggested Shopping List

Items to have on hand prior to surgery

PAP Flap Breast Reconstruction

- Prescriptions will be called into your local pharmacy as ordered by Dr. Ramanadham or given to you on discharge. Typical medications are as follows but these will be tailored to your needs.
 - Norco or tramadol (pain medication)
 - Valium (muscle relaxant and anti-anxiety medication)
 - Zofran (nausea)
 - Keflex (antibiotic)

- Gatorade or another low calorie alternative, such as water with electrolytes

- Protein Supplements

- Aspirin 81 mg

- Stool softener / laxative (choose one):
 - Docusate (Colace) 100 mg orally two to three times daily when taking pain medication
 - Milk of Magnesia 30cc/1 Tablespoon twice daily when taking pain medication
 - Prune juice or Sorbitol orally
 - Biscodyl or Magnesium Citrate as needed for constipation