

WHAT IS AN AXILLARY DISSECTION?

Axillary dissection opens the armpit to identify, examine, or remove lymph nodes (small glands, part of the lymphatic system, which filters cellular fluids). The axillary dissection is examined in the pathology department, and this assists in decision making regarding the necessity of further treatment, based on cancer cell spread.

What sort of anaesthetic will I have?

The Anaesthetist will discuss with you the type of anaesthetic, which is best for you. This type of surgery requires a general anaesthetic. Any questions regarding your anaesthetic can be asked prior to your surgery.

After your surgery

Generally patients usually stay in hospital for up from 2-5 nights. You will be encouraged to sit out of bed and mobilize as soon as you are able. Patients will be reviewed by a physiotherapist one day after surgery. You will have a drain tube coming from the surgical site. This will be removed prior to your discharge or by nurses in your home.

What kind of pain relief will I need?

The method of pain relief to be used for you will be decided by your surgeon and anaesthetist, on the day of your operation. After your surgery your pain should be controlled with oral analgesia such as Paracetamol, NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen, Diclofenac or Celebrex or and Oxycodone. Ensure if you are taking NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen, they are taken with food and not on an empty stomach. If you require any other medications after your surgery, your doctor will complete a discharge script which will be given to you prior to your discharge to home. This script can be dispensed at the hospital pharmacy or at your local pharmacy

What happens when I go home?

After the surgery you will have a dressing over the surgical site. Your dressing is waterproof and remains on until your next appointment. You may see some blood collecting under the waterproof dressing. This is normal. If you have any concerns, for example the dressing peels away and gets wet or has blisters at the edge, or there is excessive leakage, please contact one of the breast care nurses.

How you recover depends on the procedure that you have had but in general it is good to move around a little to reduce the chances of chest infections and encourage blood circulation.

When will I see the doctor?

A follow up appointment will be made for you to return to the hospital approximately 7 days after discharge from hospital. Information regarding your surgery will be sent to your general practitioner regarding date and type of surgery.

Patients are advised to follow the following instructions:

- Avoid driving for 2 weeks and/or until review at your outpatient's appointment
- Avoid lifting or straining 6 weeks post surgery
- For comfort, it is recommended to wear a well fitted bra, without wires, for the first 3 days and nights. This will minimise pain, bruising, and swelling.
- You may shower as normal but avoid hot showers as it can increase the amount of bruising and swelling.
- You may have two dressings over the same operation site, an outer dressing and another directly over the operation site. The outer dressing can be removed after 24 hours, leaving the waterproof dressing underneath.
- The dressing directly over the operation site is to be kept dry and left intact.
- Eat a high fibre diet and drink plenty of fluids to prevent constipation
- Return to work will be patient specific and as per medical advice

Contact your local doctor for the following:

- Continual bleeding or wound discharge
- Irregular bowel actions lasting days
- Red, inflamed or discharge from suture line
- Develop a temperature greater than 38 degree
- Severe pain not controlled by oral analgesia

Contact

Pre Surgery:

If you have any queries about your operation prior to your surgery, please contact the Elective Bookings Service and asked to be put through to the Unit Liaison Nurse.

If you are unwell and unable to attend the hospital for your surgery, please contact:

Elective Bookings Service: 9342 8400

Post Operative:

Melbourne Health Breast Care Nurse on 9342 7000 and ask for pager 8551 or leave a message on 9342 8120 (Monday-Friday during business hours)

The Women's Hospital Breast Care Nurse on 8342000 and ask for pager 2721 or leave a message on 83453565 (Monday –Thursday during business hours)

Breast Unit Registrar phone on 9342 7000 and ask to have the Breast Unit Registrar paged at any time

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