

Managing Pain after Breast Surgery Breast Tissue Expander Placement and DIEP Surgery

Pain is a known side effect of surgery. With breast surgery there are different types of pain you may encounter.

After mastectomy with expander placement or DIEP surgery you will most likely have significant pain. You will receive pain medication during your hospital stay and your pain will be under control before you are discharged home. Please note that there will be some level of pain even when your pain is controlled. Our goal is to decrease your pain to a *tolerable* level.

Upon discharge from the hospital, we will ensure you have received a prescription for *pain medication*. The pain medication prescribed is usually oxycodone/acetaminophen or hydrocodone/acetaminophen. Please take this as prescribed. If you need a refill on this medication, please tell us at your follow-up visit. This cannot be called in to a pharmacy. Do not drive or drink alcohol while you are taking this medication. Do not take other products containing acetaminophen or Tylenol™ while you are using this medication. Please know *these medications commonly cause constipation*; we recommend you take a stool softener daily while you use these pain medications.

A muscle relaxant will also be prescribed. This is especially effective for pain related to expander placement and pain after weekly expansions. Breast tissue expanders are sutured to the chest wall, into the muscle. This causes muscle spasm and pain after surgery and after expansions. Women often describe expander pain as *pulling, tightness, pressure, heaviness, or a feeling like wearing a tight bra that cannot be removed*. After *DIEP surgery*, women often have back pain from walking “hunched over.” This is a pain caused by muscle spasm, as well. The muscle relaxant will help decrease this pain. For this type of pain, muscle relaxants are often more effective than oxycodone or hydrocodone in making you comfortable. Take this medication, as prescribed for back pain after DIEP surgery and for pain after expander placement or expansion.

After your surgery, you can take *ibuprofen*. Ibuprofen works differently than the other pain medications we prescribe. It decreases inflammation which is a cause of pain after surgery. Take this medication with food. You can use the over-the-counter product, or ask for a prescription. Do not take this medication if you have a history of stomach ulcers, kidney disease, or if you are on blood thinners like Coumadin or Plavix. Do not take this medication if another provider has advised you to avoid it.

Please talk to your healthcare provider before starting new medications.

The following medications have been e-prescribed and are at your pharmacy:

You have been provided with the following pain medication prescription that cannot be e-prescribed: