



## Checklist: Axillary Lymph Node Dissection With or Without Lumpectomy

Follow your care team's instructions for getting ready for and recovering after surgery.

Read *About Your Lumpectomy and Axillary Surgery*

([www.msk.org/pe/lumpectomy\\_axillary\\_surgery](http://www.msk.org/pe/lumpectomy_axillary_surgery)) and *Hand and Arm Guidelines After Your Axillary Lymph Node Dissection* ([www.msk.org/pe/hand\\_arm\\_guidelines](http://www.msk.org/pe/hand_arm_guidelines)). A member of your care team will give you a copy. You can also find them online.

### Getting ready for your surgery

#### What to do

- Set up a MyMSK account if you haven't already. Visit [www.msk.org/pe/enroll\\_mymsk](http://www.msk.org/pe/enroll_mymsk) for instructions.
- Fill out a Health Care Proxy form. You can ask for a printed copy or find it at [www.health.ny.gov/publications/1430.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1430.pdf)
- Identify your caregiver.
- Arrange for someone to take you home after surgery.
- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for taking medicines.

#### What to buy

- Buy a 4% chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) solution antiseptic skin cleanser, such as Hibiclens®.
- Buy 325-milligram acetaminophen tablets, such as Tylenol® Regular Strength.

#### Presurgical Testing (PST) appointment

- Bring a list of all the prescription and over-the-counter medicines you take.
- Bring any important medical notes or results from tests done outside of MSK. (If your MSK care team already has them, you don't need to bring them.)

# 1 day before your surgery

## Note the time of your surgery

- A staff member will call you between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. They'll tell you what time to arrive for your surgery. If your surgery is on Monday, they'll call you on the Friday before.
- If you don't get a call by 7 p.m., call 212-639-5014.

## Taking medicine

- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for taking medicines.

## Showering

- Shower in the evening.
  - Wash your hair, face, and genital area as usual.
  - Wash from your neck to your feet with 4% CHG solution. Avoid your head and genital area.
  - Dry yourself with a clean towel. Do not use lotion, cream, deodorant, makeup, powder, perfume, or cologne afterward.

## Instructions for eating

- **Stop eating at midnight (12 a.m.) the night before your surgery.** This includes hard candy and gum.
  - If your healthcare provider told you to stop eating earlier than midnight, follow their instructions. Some people need to fast (not eat) for longer before their surgery.



# The day of your surgery

## Instructions for drinking

- Between midnight (12 a.m.) and 2 hours before your arrival time, only drink the liquids on the list below. **Do not eat or drink anything else.** Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time.
  - Water.
  - Clear apple juice, clear grape juice, or clear cranberry juice.
  - Gatorade or Powerade.
  - Black coffee or plain tea. It's OK to add sugar. Do not add anything else.
    - Do not add any amount of any type of milk or creamer. This includes plant-based milks and creamers.
    - Do not add honey.
    - Do not add flavored syrup.
- If you have diabetes, pay attention to the amount of sugar in these drinks. It will be easier to control your blood sugar levels if you include sugar-free, low-sugar, or no added sugar versions of these drinks.
- **Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time.** This includes water.



## Taking medicine

- Only take the medicines your healthcare provider told you to take. Take them with a small sip of water.

## Showering

- Shower before your surgery. Follow the same steps you did the night before.

## Things to remember

- If you use contact lenses, wear glasses instead.
- Take off any metal objects and jewelry, including body piercings.
- Leave valuable items at home.
- Wear a button-down or loose-fitting top and flat, safe shoes for walking.
- Bring your Health Care Proxy form and other advance directives, if you've filled them out.

## In the hospital after surgery

### Learning to care for yourself at home

- Meet with your nurse to review:
  - How to manage your pain.
  - How to take care of your drain(s) and incision(s).
  - How to shower.
  - When you'll be able to drive.
- Review arm exercises to do at home.

### Getting ready for discharge

- Make sure you have a responsible care partner to take you home.

## At home

Remember to follow your care team's instructions while you're recovering from your surgery.

### Taking medicine

- Take your medicines as directed and as needed.
- Do not drive or drink alcohol while you're taking prescription pain medicine.

### Caring for your drain(s)

- Empty your drain(s) in the morning and evening. Milk the tubing each time. Visit [www.msk.org/pe/jackson-pratt](http://www.msk.org/pe/jackson-pratt) for instructions.
- Follow your breast surgeon's instructions for when to call their office to schedule your drain removal.

### Showering

- You can shower 24 hours after your surgery.

### Exercise and physical activity

- Follow the instructions in *Exercises After Your Lumpectomy or Axillary Lymph Node Procedure*. You can find it at [www.msk.org/pe/exercises-lumpectomy-axillary-procedure](http://www.msk.org/pe/exercises-lumpectomy-axillary-procedure). A member of your care team will also give you a copy.
- Do your arm exercises 3 times every day until you can move your arm as you did before surgery. After that, do them once every day.

## Sexual activity

- You can start sexual activity when you feel ready.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if:

- You have a fever above 101 °F (38.3 °C).
- The skin around your incision(s) is redder or warmer than usual.
- You have increased discomfort in the area of your surgery.
- There's drainage from your incision(s).
- Your arm or the area around your incision(s) is starting to swell or getting more swollen.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You have any questions or concerns.



## Contact information

Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., call:

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

After 5 p.m., on weekends, and on holidays, call 212-639-2000. Ask to speak to the person on call for your healthcare provider.