



# Breast Lift (Mastopexy) Surgery Recovery Guide

## Week-by-Week Plan

Thinking ahead about recovery makes the whole journey smoother.

Below is your day-by-day and week-by-week timeline with pain control, sleep, bra schedule, scar care, activity limits, and red-flag symptoms.

Save it, share it with your caregiver, and refer to it as you heal.

This guide covers lift-only and notes where **lift + implants** or **lift + fat transfer** differ.

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## Night Before & Morning Of Surgery

- **Hydrate + protein:** Eat protein-rich meals in the 48h before (unless told otherwise).
- Stop nicotine/vaping/alcohol per your surgeon's instructions.
- Shower with antibacterial wash (or pre-op soap if given). No lotion, perfume, deodorant, or makeup.
- **Clothing:** Loose zip-front top, slip-on shoes.
- **Home setup:** Pillows for back/side support, meds picked up, freezer meals, water bottle, phone charger at bed level.
- **Documents:** Consent, prescriptions, caregiver's phone numbers.

## The First 72 Hours (Hours 0–72)

### Pain, swelling, and dressings

- **Pain:** Expect pressure/tightness, especially across the lower pole and vertical incision. Take scheduled pain meds the first 24–48h (don't wait for pain to spike).
- **Nausea:** Use anti-nausea meds as prescribed; small sips of water and bland snacks help.
- **Dressings & drains:** You'll leave with surgical tapes/steri-strips and a support bra. Some cases use drains (less common in lift-only). Your team will show you care and tracking if you have them.

### Movement & sleep

- Walk every 1–2 hours while awake (short laps at home) to reduce clot risk.
- Sleep on your back with head/torso slightly elevated (wedge or stacked pillows). Avoid side sleep for 2–3 weeks unless cleared.

### Hygiene & meals

- Sponge bath until you're cleared to shower (often 24–48h after the first dressing change).
- Small, protein-rich meals; plenty of fluids and fiber to prevent constipation from pain meds.

**No lifting > 5–10 lbs,** no reaching overhead, no pushing/pulling (doors, heavy drawers), no pets/kids in your lap.

## Week 1 (Days 1–7): “Settle and Protect”

**Goals:** reduce swelling, protect incisions, control pain, move safely.

- **Bra:** Wear the surgical/support bra 24/7 (take off briefly to shower if allowed). No underwire.
- **Incision care:** Keep dry. You may have steri-strips, don't pick them; they'll loosen on their own.
- **Shower:** Typically allowed after 24–48h once dressings are changed; pat dry with a clean towel, cool hairdryer on low is helpful.
- **Driving:** Only when you're off narcotics and can steer/brake comfortably without pain (usually after day 3–5, varies).
- **Work:** Many return to remote/desk work in 3–5 days if pain is controlled and no lifting is required.
- **Bowel care:** Stool softener + fiber + water; short walks help a lot.
- **Normal this week:** tightness, swelling, bruising along lower breast and vertical line, “high and tight” breast position, mild pulling sensations.

## Week 2 (Days 8–14): “Gentle Range of Motion”

**Goals:** comfort, posture, light activity, start scar strategy planning.

- **Pain:** Should be decreasing; swap to OTC pain relievers if allowed.
- **Incisions:** Often still taped; any external sutures may be removed now if used.
- **Bra:** Continue support bra 24/7. Some switch to a soft front-zip sports bra if approved.
- **Range of motion:** Gentle elbow/shoulder circles below shoulder height; no overhead reach, no lifting > 10 lbs.
- **Work:** Most desk workers feel normal enough to resume full hours.
- **Showering:** Normal showers; still no baths, pools, hot tubs, sauna/steam.
- **Lift + implants:** expect more upper-pole pressure and “implant sitting high.” This softens over the next 6–12 weeks.

## Weeks 3–4: “Back to Routine (With Limits)”

**Goals:** resume light life tasks; start structured scar care if cleared.

- **Scar care starts** (if your incisions are fully closed and your surgeon says “go”):
  - Silicone sheets or silicone gel twice daily for 8–12+ weeks.
  - Scar massage (5–10 min/day) with a neutral moisturizer as directed.
  - Micropore taping across the vertical and T-junction can reduce tension—ask for technique.
- **Exercise:**
  - Unlimited walking as tolerated.
  - Light lower-body work (bodyweight, stationary bike) if no bounce.
  - No running/high-impact, no chest/upper-body strength yet.
- **Driving & errands:** Generally fine if comfortable and off narcotics.
- **Sex:** Gentle, non-pressure positions; protect breasts (no traction/pressure).

## Weeks 5–6: “Gradual Strength & Mobility”

**Goals:** reintroduce cardio/strength with surgeon clearance.

- **Cardio:** Low-impact cardio can progress; some return to light jogging near week 6 if swelling is minimal (confirm with your surgeon).
- **Strength:** Start light upper-body (bands, light dumbbells) focusing on form; avoid chest-dominant moves (push-ups, chest press) until week 8–10.
- **Bra shift:** Many can move to a higher-support sports bra for workouts; no underwire until cleared (often 6–8 weeks).
- **Scar care:** Continue silicone daily; SPF 30+ on scars if they'll see any sun (even through thin shirts).

## Months 2–3: “Shape Settling & Confidence Building”

**What changes now**

- **Breasts drop and fluff:** the “high and tight” look relaxes; the lower pole fills out; upper pole softens.
- **Sensitivity:** Tingles, zings, or patchy numb areas often improve as nerves recover.
- **Exercise:** Return to **most** activities, increasing intensity gradually. Save heavy chest work for last (week 10–12+).

- **Underwire bras:** Usually allowed around 8–12 weeks once incision edges toughen—confirm at your checkup.
- **Scar color:** Shifts from pink/red to lighter; texture flattens slowly.

## Months 4–6: “Refinement Phase”

- **Finalizing shape:** You’ll see a closer-to-final contour; small asymmetries from baseline anatomy often persist but are less obvious.
- **Scar care:** Keep up silicone if still pink/raised; consider silicone + gentle massage until scars go pale/flat.
- **Sun rules (year-round):** SPF 30+ daily. UV exposure darkens scars and can delay fading.
- **Photos:** Great time for “after” photos (consistent lighting/angles).
- **Lift + implants:** implants continue to settle; true position/softness may keep improving up to 6–12 months.

## Special Situations

### Lift + Implants

- Expect more early tightness and “upper-pole fullness.”
- Activity limits are stricter on bouncing and chest workouts.
- If you feel asymmetric pressure or a sudden increase in swelling on one side, call.

### Lift + Fat Transfer

- No pressure on grafted areas (avoid side-sleeping on heavily grafted sides for 2–3 weeks).
- Keep calories/protein adequate; dramatic dieting can reduce graft take.
- Small fat-necrosis nodules can feel firm then soften; report new, painful, or growing lumps.

### Tendency to Hypertrophic/Keloid Scars

- Start silicone early (once closed) and stay consistent for 3–6 months.
- Your surgeon may add steroid injections, laser, or taping if you start to raise.

## Incision & Scar Care: The Playbook

1. Keep incisions dry while they seal (first 1–2 weeks).
2. Start silicone (gel/sheets) once closed; 2× daily for 8–12+ weeks.
3. Massage along the scar lanes as directed, focusing on any firm bands.
4. Taping (paper tape) across vertical/T-junction for 2–6 weeks reduces tension.
5. No picking at flakes/steri-strips; let them release naturally.
6. SPF 30+ on scars for 12–18 months if sun exposure is possible.
7. Watch for red flags: spreading redness, heat, thick yellow drainage, or separation.

## Bra Timeline (Typical—your surgeon's plan rules)

- **Weeks 0–4:** Surgical/support bra 24/7 (no underwire).
- **Weeks 4–8:** Soft sports bra with good support; change when damp from sweat.
- **Weeks 8–12+:** Trial underwire if comfortable and cleared. Fit by a professional once swelling is down.

Avoid push-up styles that pull on fresh scars early on.

## Activity & Lifestyle Cheatsheet

Activity	When It's Usually OK*
Desk work	3–7 days
Driving (off narcotics, comfortable ROM)	3–7 days
Light housework (no lifting)	1–2 weeks
Walking (unlimited, progressive)	Day 1 onward
Lower-body exercise (low impact)	2–3 weeks
Light upper-body (no chest strain)	5–6 weeks
Running/HIIT/jumping	~6–8+ weeks
Heavy chest workouts	~10–12+ weeks

\*Always follow your surgeon's specific clearance.

## Supplies Checklist (Pre-Order = Less Stress)

- Front-zip support bras (2–3)
- Wedge pillow or adjustable pillow stack
- Silicone gel/sheets (for weeks 3–12+)
- Micropore paper tape (tension relief)
- Gauze pads & sterile swabs (if drains/incision care)
- Mild soap, fragrance-free moisturizer
- OTC pain reliever, stool softener, fiber gummies
- Large water bottle, easy protein snacks
- Button/zip tops and loose joggers
- Thermometer (fever check)
- Small pill organizer + phone reminders

## Red Flags—Call Us ASAP If You Notice

- Fever > 100.4°F (38°C) with chills
- Sudden, one-sided swelling, severe tightening, or a rapidly enlarging bruise
- Spreading redness, warmth, foul drainage
- Worsening pain not helped by meds/rest
- Shortness of breath, chest pain, calf pain/swelling (ER)
- Skin darkening along the incision or nipple (urgent check)

Early calls prevent late problems, please don't "wait and see."

## Managing Expectations: What's Normal vs. Not

**Normal:** swelling, mild bruising, positional asymmetry (side-sleeping later can influence it), itching as nerves wake up, twinges/zings, scars changing color for months.

**Not normal:** rapidly worsening asymmetry, new hard warmth with fever, incision opening, or persistent fluid "sloshing" sensation—ring us.

Take front/oblique/side photos at 2, 6, 12 weeks, then 6 months, same lighting, distance, posture. You'll really see progress when images are consistent.

## Quick Answers to Questions You May Have

### **When can I wear an underwire bra?**

Usually 8–12 weeks after surgery, once incisions are fully healed and non-tender. Start short periods and listen to your skin.

### **Why do my breasts look high and square at first?**

Normal swelling + tight skin envelope. Expect drop-and-fluff over 6–12 weeks.

### **Can I sleep on my side?**

After 2–3 weeks if comfortable. Use a pillow in front of your torso to prevent rolling.

### **My nipples feel numb/extra sensitive, will this improve?**

Often yes. Nerve recovery can take weeks to months. Report any severe, persistent changes.

### **How long until I see final results?**

A very good idea by 3 months; scars continue to fade up to 12–18 months.

Go slow to go fast. Wear your support bra, walk daily, keep incisions clean and dry, start silicone on time, protect scars from the sun, and ask questions early.

If you're still exploring options, read [how to choose the right cosmetic surgeon](#) and our [cosmetic surgery financing guide](#) to plan the safest, and most affordable, path to results you'll love.



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