

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

# GEARS: Your post surgery recovery programme

*DIEP Flap Breast Reconstruction  
patient checklist*



NHS

Name

Date of surgery

We understand that undertaking cancer surgery might be a stressful period. To alleviate some of the stress on your mind and body, we recommend following the GEARS programme.

GEARS stands for:



Get up

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Eat

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Analgesia

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Remove

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Speak up






## Day before your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Remain active throughout the day</li> <li>– Exercise at least once today to raise your heart rate</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Maintain your normal diet; no food after midnight</li> <li>– Only drink water after midnight</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Continue regular medications as directed by your pre-assessment nurse</li> <li>– Tinzaparin injection at 6pm in your buttock or thigh</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Shower thoroughly as instructed by your pre-assessment nurse</li> <li>– Continue to avoid smoking before surgery as advised in your preoperative appointment</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Call to check your arrival time and details</li> <li>– Plan details for your discharge to avoid delays</li> <li>– Bring supportive underwear</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






## Morning of surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Remain active until your surgery</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No food after midnight</li> <li>– Only drink water until 6am; nothing after 6am</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Continue regular medications as directed by your pre-assessment nurse</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have a shower before coming to hospital</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Bring a supportive bra</li> <li>– Ask any questions you have before your surgery</li> <li>– Plan details for your discharge to avoid delays</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






## Immediately after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deep breathing exercises throughout the day</li> <li>- Do not lie flat</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Drink sips of water; progress to clear fluids if tolerating</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn to use Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)</li> <li>- Make your team aware if you are in pain</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No actions required today</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You will be wearing your supportive bra when you return from theatre</li> <li>- Your nurse will check your DIEP flap regularly throughout the night</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise any questions or concerns to your team</li> <li>- Plan details of your discharge to avoid delays</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






## Day 1 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deep breathing exercises throughout the day</li> <li>- Sit out of bed for a minimum of one hour</li> <li>- Mobilise to the bathroom as required</li> <li>- Team to consider referring for chest physio if required</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eat and drink normally after being reviewed by your team</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make your team aware if you are in pain</li> <li>- Pain team will see you to optimise your pain relief</li> <li>- Stop PCA at 8am ward round, and start regular oral analgesia and laxatives</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Your team will remove your urinary catheter if you are mobilising</li> <li>- Your team will remove your arterial line, if one was inserted for your operation</li> <li>- Your nurse will continue to check your DIEP flap regularly, but the frequency will gradually reduce</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise any questions or concerns to your team</li> <li>- Learn how to administer Tinzaparin injection</li> <li>- Wear support bra and pants if drains are removed</li> <li>- Continue planning your discharge (refer to SAFER discharge checklist on page 12)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>






## Day 2 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobilise with your physiotherapist</li> <li>- Exercise as directed by your physiotherapist</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eat and drink normally</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make your team aware if you are in pain</li> <li>- Pain team will see you if required</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Your team will remove your urinary catheter if not already removed</li> <li>- Your nurse will continue to regularly check your DIEP flap, the frequency will gradually reduce</li> <li>- Your abdominal drain may be removed after surgical review</li> <li>- If you have abdominal microfoam this will be removed today</li> <li>- Shower thoroughly today</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise any questions or concerns to your team</li> <li>- Independent with tinzaparin injection administration</li> <li>- Wear supportive underwear</li> <li>- Continue planning your discharge (refer to SAFER discharge checklist on page 12)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

## Day 3 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobilise independently as tolerated (including stairs if directed to do so)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eat and drink normally</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make your team aware if you are in pain</li> <li>- Your team will ensure your discharge medications are ready</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Your nurse will continue to check your DIEP flap, the frequency will gradually reduce</li> <li>- You may have your abdominal drain removed today after surgical team review</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise any questions or concerns to your team</li> <li>- Your team may consider discharge today if SAFER discharge checklist achieved (see page 12)</li> <li>- Ensure you are confident with your tinzaparin injection administration and learn how to care for your wounds</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

## Day 4 after your surgery

Task	Completed
 – Dress and mobilise freely in preparation for discharge	<input type="checkbox"/>
 – Eat and drink normally	<input type="checkbox"/>
 – You will have all of your medications explained to you before discharge	<input type="checkbox"/>
 – All cannulas will be removed before discharge – Your abdominal drain will be removed before discharge. If not, a plan will be made to remove it after you have gone home	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 – Raise any questions or concerns to your team – Discharge home – SAFER discharge checklist achieved (see page 12)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

## Frequently asked questions

### When can I start driving?

You can drive as soon as you are off strong painkillers and can confidently perform an emergency stop, if in doubt please contact your insurer.

### When is my next appointment?

Your discharge summary will include information on follow up appointments, duration of discharge medication and who to contact if you have questions.

### How long do I continue injecting myself with Tinzaparin?

Most patients continue to use the Tinzaparin injections for 28 days post-operatively. A small group of patients will be specifically directed to use the injections for longer for clinical reasons. The team will discuss this with you directly.

## SAFER Clinical Criteria for Discharge (CCD)

1. Mobilising freely; eating and drinking adequately
2. Pain well controlled with oral analgesia
3. Independent with care for wounds and dressings; or District Nurse arranged
4. Self-administering Tinzaparin injections
5. All lines/drains removed; or plan for removal as outpatient
6. All concerns addressed, contact details given, follow up arranged

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This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from: The Royal Marsden Help Centre  
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The information in this booklet is correct at the time of going to print.

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## Contact details

It is **very important** that if you have any concerns or problems after leaving hospital, you contact someone as soon as possible.

Your key worker:

### The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline

020 8915 6899 (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week)

## Other useful sources of patient information:

### Macmillan Cancer Support

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

0808 808 0000 (free phone)

Macmillan provides information and support on cancer from diagnosis to treatment and beyond. A wide range of resources are also offered.

### Cancer Research UK

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

CRUK has a patient information website, with information on all types of cancer and treatment choices.



Radiation and  
Chemotherapy Services  
Practice & Procedure