

Patient agreement to investigation or treatment

Breast Surgery: Axillary clearance

Authors: Cambridge Breast Unit

Brief description:

- You have been recommended an axillary clearance as the surgical treatment for your breast cancer. Under general anaesthetic, lymph glands under the arm are removed.
- The operation usually lasts up to one to two hours and requires a short hospital stay of a few days.
- Here, we explain some of the aims, benefits, risks and alternatives to this procedure (operation/treatment). We want you to be informed about your choices to help you to be fully involved in making any decisions.
- Please ask about anything you do not fully understand or wish to have explained in more detail.
- If you would like this information in another format or language or would like help completing the form, please ask a member of our staff.

Please bring this form with you to hospital

- You will be asked to read this form carefully, and you and your doctor (or other appropriate healthcare professional) will sign it to document your consent.
- All our consent forms are available on the Addenbrooke’s website: <http://www.addenbrookes.org.uk/consent>
- Remember, you can change your mind about having the procedure at any time even after you have signed the form.

For staff use:

Does the patient have any special requirements? (For example: requires an interpreter or other additional communication method)

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About axillary clearance

Breast side:

Before your procedure

- If it is thought necessary, you will be seen at the pre-admission clinic prior to your surgery.
- At this clinic, we shall ask you for details of your medical history and carry out any necessary clinical examinations and investigations. This is a good opportunity for you to ask us any questions about the procedure, but please feel free to discuss any concerns you might have at any time.
- You will be asked if you are taking any tablets or other types of medication - these might be ones prescribed by a doctor or bought over the counter in a pharmacy. It helps us if you bring with you details of anything you are taking (for example bring the packaging with you).
- This procedure involves the use of general anaesthesia, which means you will not be conscious during the surgery. The anaesthetist will see you before the procedure to assess your state of health and discuss the details with you.
- You will normally be admitted to hospital on the day of surgery.

During the procedure

- At the start of your procedure, you will be given the necessary anaesthetic and - see below for details of this.
- The lymph glands under the arm (axilla) drain a large area of the lymphatic fluid from the breast and arm, and sometimes the tumour can spread to the lymph glands. The procedure involves the removal of the majority of these glands. This will reduce the possibility of a recurrence of the tumour under the arm as well as informing us whether the glands are involved by the tumour, which helps us plan the next stage of your treatment.

After the procedure

- Following general anaesthetic you will wake up in the recovery room after your operation. You might have an oxygen mask on your face to help you breathe. You might also wake up feeling sleepy.
- You will have an intravenous line (called a drip) in your arm. This may be attached to a bag of fluid, which provides fluid until you are well enough to eat and drink by yourself.
- While you are in the recovery room, a nurse will check your pulse and blood pressure regularly. When you are awake enough to be moved, you will be taken to a ward.
- Sometimes, people feel sick after an operation, especially after a general anaesthetic. If you feel sick, please tell a nurse and you will be offered medicine to make you feel more comfortable.

- When you wake up, you may have a drain (plastic tube) coming from your wound. The drain collects tissue fluid in a small collecting chamber, which is monitored daily. When there is less than a certain amount (usually 50mls) of fluid collected in the drain over 24 hours, the drainage tube will be removed, which is a simple procedure. It might be possible for you to be discharged with your drain in place after 1-2 nights. Your district nurse will take over your care and remove the drain. If not, you can stay in hospital until the drain is removed, this will usually be up to three days after your surgery. Occasionally it may be possible to avoid the use of drains.
- **Eating and drinking:** After the operation, you will be able to eat and drink when you are awake again. This usually takes two to four hours. How quickly you return to a normal diet will depend on how you feel. Most patients recover their appetite very quickly.
- **Mobile again:** You will be encouraged to get out of bed as soon as possible and move around, this is to help prevent blood clots in your legs.
- We will arrange for the physiotherapist to visit you on the ward to give advice and exercises.
- **When you can leave hospital:** You may be able to go home the day of your operation or the day after your operation if you feel well enough.
- **When you can resume normal activities including work:** You can usually begin gentle work within a day or two, but you might need to wait a little longer for more vigorous activity.
- It is not uncommon to feel a bit 'down' after any operation, so do ask your doctor or breast care nurse if you feel you need more psychological support.
- **Special measures you need to take after the procedure:** You will be given more detailed information about any special measures you need to take after the procedure. You will also be given information about things to watch out for that might be early signs of problems (for example, infection).
- Experienced staff are available to help you. Please tell your nurses or doctors about any concerns that you have, they will try to help you resolve them.
- The skin stitches are dissolvable and will not need to be removed. You will have a light dressing covering your wound to keep it clean, and this will usually be in place for the first day or so. The wound may be secured with steri-strips which are like small pieces of tape. They help healing and support the wound. These will gradually come off in the bath or the shower.
- **Check-ups and results:** You will be given an outpatients appointment for approximately two weeks for the results of your surgery. By then the tissue removed at the operation will have been examined and your results discussed by the Breast Care Team. Any further treatment, if recommended, will be discussed with you then.

Intended benefits of the procedure

- To remove the cancer in the axillary glands as far as surgically possible and to plan the next stage of your treatment , and to help prevent recurrence and improve your outcome.

Who will perform my procedure?

- This procedure will be performed by a breast surgeon who is a member of the Breast Team.

Alternative procedures that are available

- Radiotherapy to the axilla has been used as an alternative to axillary clearance. However, the present recommendation by the Breast Team is that in your case, surgery is the best form of treatment at this stage.
- Other forms of treatment may be utilised in the treatment of cancer such as radiation therapy (using high-dose x-rays to kill cancer cells), chemotherapy (using drugs to kill cancer cells), and hormone therapy (using hormones to stop the cells from growing)..These will be discussed with you if and when appropriate.

Serious or frequently occurring risks

- **Axillary clearance:**
 - **Seroma** is a collection of fluid under the arm after surgery. It is relatively common after axillary clearance, but is easily treated by drainage through a small needle. Draining is a very simple procedure that can be done by a member of the Breast Team.
 - **Numbness:** You may experience numbness and discomfort in the armpit and upper arm. The numbness usually lessens slowly, after treatment, but might not resolve completely
 - **Shoulder stiffness:** The shoulder may become stiff and painful after your operation. Performing shoulder exercises (taught to you after the operation) improves mobility.
 - **Lymphoedema** is a swelling in the tissue below the skin caused by lymph fluid which cannot drain away. This can occur when the lymph glands are removed (by surgery) or blocked (by radiotherapy) secondary to scar tissue formation. The hand and or arm may swell at any time after the surgery. It can affect about 15 to 20% of women but only around 5% to a significant degree. There are certain precautions you need to take to prevent lymphoedema, these will be discussed with you by the Breast Care Nurse.
 - **Surgery:** All operations have a small risk of side effects, such as pain, bleeding and infection. The risks associated with general anaesthesia include potential

breathing and heart problems, as well as possible reactions to medications. For a woman who is otherwise in good health, the risk of a serious complication due to general anaesthesia is less than 1%.

Post surgical treatment

When deciding if you need post-surgical treatment (adjuvant therapy), your team will assess several factors, including the risk of the cancer recurring, the characteristics of the cancer, and how much the treatment will benefit you. This will be discussed with you by a member of the Breast Team.

Information and support

Additional information will be given to you in the form of a Patient Information Breast Care Pack. Do feel free to speak to a member of staff if you have any questions or anxieties.

Breast Care Nurses

Telephone: 01223 586756
01223 586573
01223 596291
01223 216313
01223 348272
01223586573

Further information

www.breastcancercare.org.uk tel:0808 800 6000

www.breakthrough.org.uk tel: 08080 100 200

General anaesthesia

Before your operation

Before your operation your anaesthetist will visit you in the ward, although occasionally this will happen in a pre-anaesthetic assessment clinic. If you are a day case patient it may not be until just before your operation. The anaesthetist who looks after you on the day of your operation is the one who is responsible for making the final decisions about your anaesthetic. He or she will need to understand about your general health, any medication that you are taking and any past health problems that you have had. Your anaesthetist will want to know whether or not you are a smoker, whether you have had any abnormal reactions to any of the drugs or if you have any allergies. They will also want to know about your teeth, whether you wear dentures, have caps or a plate. Your anaesthetist needs to know all these things so that he or she can assess how to look after you in this vital period. Your anaesthetist may examine your heart and lungs. The anaesthetist will be happy to allay any worries you may have about your anaesthetic.

Before your operation you will usually be changed into a gown and can walk or be wheeled to the operating suite into an anaesthetic room. This is an ante-room outside the theatre. The anaesthetist, his or her assistant and nurses are likely to be present. An intravenous line (drip) may be inserted. Monitoring devices may be attached to you, such as a blood pressure cuff or a pulse oximeter. A pulse oximeter is usually a little red light in a small box, which is taped to your finger. It shows how much oxygen you have in your blood and is one of the vital monitors that an anaesthetist uses during your operation to ensure that you remain in the best of health. You may be given some oxygen to breathe.

During your operation

While you are unconscious and unaware your anaesthetist remains with you at all times. He or she monitors your condition and administers the right amount of anaesthetic drugs to maintain you in the correct level of unconsciousness for the period of the surgery. Your anaesthetist is constantly aware of your condition and trained to respond. Your anaesthetist will be monitoring such factors as heart rate, blood pressure, heart rhythm, body temperature and breathing. He or she will also constantly watch your need for fluid or blood replacement. If you have any other medical conditions, your anaesthetist will know of these from your pre-operative assessment and be able to treat them during surgery.

After your operation

After your operation your anaesthetist continues to monitor your condition carefully. You will probably be transferred to a recovery ward where specially trained nurses, under the direction of anaesthetists, will look after you. Your anaesthetist and the recovery nurses will ensure that all the anaesthetic effects are reversed and that you are closely monitored as you return to full consciousness. You may be given some oxygen to breathe in the recovery area, and may find that intravenous drips have been inserted whilst you are unconscious in theatre and that these will be replacing fluids that you might require. You will be given medication for any pain that you might feel.

You are likely to feel drowsy and sleepy at this stage. Some patients feel sick, others may have a sore throat related to the insertion of the breathing tube during surgery. During this time it is important that you relax as much as you can, breathe deeply, do not be afraid to cough, and do not hesitate to ask the nursing staff for any pain relief, and about any queries you may have. You are likely to have hazy memories of this time and some patients experience vivid dreams. Once you are fully awake you will be returned to the ward, and if you are a day patient will be allowed to go to the waiting area to fully recover before you are accompanied home. Do not expect to feel completely normal immediately!

What are the risks of general anaesthesia?

In modern anaesthesia, serious problems are uncommon. Risks cannot be removed completely, but modern equipment, training and drugs have made it a much safer procedure in recent years. The risk to you as an individual will depend on; whether you have any other

illness, personal factors (such as smoking or being overweight) or surgery which is complicated, long or done in an emergency. Please discuss any pre-existing medical condition with your anaesthetist.

- Very common and common side effects (1 in 10 or 1 in 100 people)
Feeling sick and vomiting after surgery, sore throat, dizziness, blurred vision, headache, itching, aches, pains and backache, pain during injection of drugs, bruising and soreness, confusion or memory loss.
- Uncommon side effects and complications (1 in 1000 people)
Chest infection, bladder problems, muscle pains, slow breathing (depressed respiration), damage to teeth, lips or tongue, an existing medical condition getting worse, awareness (becoming conscious during your operation).
- Rare or very rare complications (1 in 10,000 or 1 in 100,000)
Damage to the eyes, serious allergy to drugs, nerve damage, death, equipment failure.



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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Consent form 1

Patient agreement to investigation or treatment

For staff use only: Surname: First names: Date of birth: Hospital no: Male/Female: (Use hospital identification label)

Responsible health professional/job title

Special requirements.....
 (For example, other language/other communication method)

Name of proposed procedure or course of treatment

Axillary clearance **Side (left/right).....**

Statement of health professional

(To be filled in by a health professional with an **appropriate knowledge of the proposed procedure**, as specified in the Hospital's consent policy)

I have explained the procedure to the patient. In particular, I have explained:

- How it will be performed
 - The intended benefits of the procedure: To remove the cancer in the axillary glands as far as surgically possible and to plan the next stage of your treatment , and to help prevent recurrence and improve your outcome
 - Any serious or frequently occurring risks including those specific to the patient: Seroma, numbness, shoulder stiffness, Lymphoedema, pain, bleeding, infection
 - Any extra procedures that might become necessary during the procedure
- Blood transfusion
- Other procedure (please specify)

I have discussed what the treatment / procedure is likely to involve, the benefits and risks of any available alternative treatments (including no treatment) and any particular concerns of this patient.

- The following information leaflet has been provided: CF210 Version 5 April 2011.....

This procedure will involve:

- General and/or regional anaesthesia Local anaesthesia Sedation

Health professional's signature **Date:**

Name (PRINT): Job title:

Contact details (if patient wishes to discuss details later)

I have offered the patient information about the procedure but s/he has declined information.

Important notes: (tick if applicable)

- The patient has withdrawn consent (ask patient to sign/date here)
- See also advance directive/living will

Statement of the interpreter (if appropriate)

I have interpreted the information to the best of my ability, and in a way in which I believe s/he can understand:

Interpreter's signature **Date:**

Name (PRINT):

For staff use only:
Surname:
First names:
Date of birth:
Hospital no:
Male/Female:
(Use hospital identification label)

Statement of patient

Please read this form carefully. If your treatment has been planned in advance, you should already have your own copy, which describes the benefits and risks of the proposed treatment. If not, you will be offered a copy now. Do ask if you have any further questions. The staff at Addenbrooke's are here to help you. **You have the right to change your mind at any time before the procedure is undertaken, including after you have signed this form.**

Training doctors and other health professionals is essential to the continuation of the Health Service and improving the quality of care. Your treatment may provide an important opportunity for such training, where necessary under the careful supervision of a senior doctor. You may, however, decline to be involved in the formal training of medical and other students without this adversely affecting your care and treatment.

Please read the following:

I understand that I will have the opportunity to discuss the details of anaesthesia with an anaesthetist before the procedure, unless the urgency of my situation prevents this. (This only applies to patients having general or regional anaesthesia.)

I understand that you cannot give me a guarantee that a particular person will perform the procedure. The person undertaking the procedure will, however, have appropriate experience.

I understand that any procedure in addition to those described on this form will only be carried out if it is necessary to save my life or to prevent serious harm to my health.

I have been told about additional procedures which may become necessary during my treatment. I have listed below any procedures that **I do not wish, without further discussion, to be carried out.**

I understand that any tissue (including blood) removed as part of the procedure or treatment will be anonymised and may be used for teaching or quality control, and stored or disposed of in a manner regulated by appropriate, ethical, legal and professional standards.

I understand that all research will be approved by a research ethics committee and undertaken in accordance with appropriate ethical, legal and professional standards.

I understand that the research may be conducted within a hospital, university, not for profit organisation or a company laboratory.

Please tick boxes to indicate you either agree/disagree to the three points below. Yes No

I agree that tissue (including blood) not needed for my own diagnosis or treatment can be used for **research which may include genetic research.** **If you wish** to withdraw your consent for the use of your tissue (including blood) for research, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Yes No

I agree to the use of photography for the purpose of diagnosis and treatment. Yes No

I agree to anonymised photographs being used for medical teaching. Yes No

I confirm that the risks, benefits and alternatives of this procedure have been discussed with me and I have read and understood the above and agree to the procedure (or course of treatment) on this form.

Patient's signature: Date:

Name (PRINT):

If the patient is unable to sign but has indicated his/her consent, a witness should sign below. Young people may also like a parent to sign here (see guidance notes).

Witness' signature: Date:

Name (PRINT):

Confirmation of consent (to be completed by a health professional when the patient is admitted for the procedure, if the patient has signed the form in advance)

On behalf of the team treating the patient, I have confirmed with the patient that s/he has no further questions and wishes the procedure to go ahead.

Signature Date:

Name (PRINT): Job Title:

Copy accepted by patient: yes / no (please circle)