PRE-SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS:
FREE TRAM / DIEP ABDOMINAL FLAP BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

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A successful surgery requires a partnership between you and **Ankit Desai, MD**

The following instructions are essential to a safe experience and good outcome. Use this as a checklist as you approach your surgery date. If you are unable to comply with these instructions, you must notify our office as soon as possible. As a result, your surgery may have to be postponed or delayed, at the judgment of **Ankit Desai, MD**

This is essential to your health and safety.

### THREE WEEKS OR MORE BEFORE SURGERY

There may be several weeks between your decision to have surgery and your actual surgical date. During this time there are several important considerations:

**Good nutrition:** Eat well during the weeks prior to surgery. Crash dieting, over-eating or high alcohol intake can greatly affect your overall health and well-being. A healthy, balanced diet is essential. Also, begin taking the following supplements daily:

**Pre-operative testing:** Make certain to schedule all of the pre-operative testing and clearance you have been given. Refer to the **PACES** form. Make certain all test results are received by **Dr. Ankit Desai** as required.

**Stop smoking:** Smoking can greatly impair your ability to heal. You must be nicotine and smoke-free for at least 4 weeks prior to surgery. You must also be free of any nicotine patch or nicotine-based products for a minimum of 4 weeks prior to surgery. You must avoid being in close proximity or in a closed room with anyone who smokes.

### TWO to THREE WEEKS BEFORE SURGERY

This is an important planning and preparation time. Follow all of the good health habits you have begun in addition to the following:

**Shop for your post surgery bra:** Will be used 1-2 weeks after surgery

- under wires are not advised
- elastic, cotton or other breathable unpadded fabric with good full-cup coverage and support
- wide, well-balanced shoulder straps and wide supportive band across the back and beneath the breasts
- front-closure, if possible
- Cup and band size (this may be somewhat larger to accommodate any post-surgery swelling).
- Note: You may wish to purchase more than one bra, for laundering. Don’t make this an expensive purchase since you will likely only be wearing this bra for 4-6 weeks.

**Fill your prescriptions:** Even though you will be in the hospital, some of your prescriptions will be filled in advance. Bring these with you to the hospital. Some pain medication prescriptions may need to be filled ON THE DAY these prescriptions are written. Our office will advise you accordingly.
STOP taking the following for the duration before your surgery. Taking any of the following can increase your risk of bleeding and other complications:

- Garlic Supplements
- Green Tea or green tea extracts
- Vitamin E
- Estrogen supplements
- St. John’s Wort
- All other medications indicated
- Gingko

Fitness: Don’t over-do it, but continue walking. Avoid anything strenuous or that could potentially cause injury to your shoulders, back, pectoral muscles, arms or upper body.

NO SMOKING: Stay away from second-hand smoke, too. Your healing and health depend heavily on this.

Lead a healthy lifestyle. Practice good hand-washing and avoid large crowds, or individuals who are ill. Do not risk catching a virus or cold:

ONE WEEK BEFORE SURGERY

Confirm your surgery plans. This includes your transportation, support in the hospital and after-care once you are released (a responsible adult who can provide both physical and emotional support).

- Review your prescription orders and instructions.
- Purchase Polysporin or other antibiotic ointment.

Continue to practice healthy habits, nutrition and fitness. No strenuous exercise. No saunas, hot tubs, steam baths, or mud wraps. **No smoking or alcohol.**

Plan for your hospital stay. Consider the clothing and other items, like a favorite pillow or quilt from home that will help you to feel comfortable during your hospital stay. Shop for magazines, books and other things to keep you busy and entertained during your hospital stay and the days following surgery.

- Find your comfort zone. Locate the most comfortable place where you can gently recline and recover once you are released home from the hospital.

Relax. Call our office with any unusual anxiety or concerns. Get plenty of rest.

ONE – TWO DAYS BEFORE SURGERY

- Pack your bag for the hospital. This should include:

  - All paperwork
  - Your identification
  - All prescription medications
  - Reading glasses
  - Comfortable, loose-fitting clothing with a zip or button top, and slip on, non-skid shoes to wear when you are released home
  - A robe, slippers and warm, clean cotton socks
  - A favorite pillow or quilt
  - Skincare, toothbrush and personal hygiene needs
  - Post surgical bra
  - Reading materials, a journal, needlework or other items to keep you comfortable and busy as you rest in the hospital.
IF YOU WILL BE ARRIVING AT THE HOSPITAL ON THE DAY OF YOUR SURGERY:

Do not eat or drink anything after 12 midnight the day before surgery. Anything more than a small amount of water as needed for brushing teeth or swallowing medication may result in the need to cancel surgery. This includes candy, gum, and mints.

NOTHING by mouth on the day of surgery: Anything more than a small amount of water as needed for brushing teeth or swallowing medication may result in the need to cancel surgery. This includes candy, gum, and mints.

YOUR TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL:

Dress appropriately.

• Do not wear cosmetics, jewelry of any kind, contact lenses, hair clips, body piercing: (If there is something you cannot remove, let the admitting nurse know right away.)

• Wear comfortable, clean, loose-fitting clothing: Wear only a top that zips or buttons up the front. Do not wear pullovers, turtlenecks or any tight fitting top or bottom. Wear slip on shoes.

I have read and understand all of the above instructions. I understand that following these instructions is solely my responsibility. I understand that it is also my responsibility to ask my doctor and his or her staff any questions I have related to these instructions or about my procedure, health and healing.

Patient Signature

Date

Printed Name of Patient

Signature of Practice Representative and Witness
Standard Risks with Any Type of Surgical Procedure

1. **Wound Infection** – An infection is quite unusual after this type of surgery. Should an infection occur, treatment including antibiotics, dressing changes, and additional surgery may be required. It may delay recovery time by three to six weeks. Delayed healing and loss of flap or implant is possible. Some areas of the chest skin or flap may heal abnormally or slowly. Smokers have a greater risk of skin or flap loss and wound healing complications.

2. **Anesthesia** – Your surgery will be done under general anesthesia and there are inherent risks associated with anesthesia. Speak with your anesthesiologist if you have any specific questions or concerns.

3. **Additional surgery/complications** – As with any procedure, there is a small risk of having to return to the operating room for bleeding. With the DIEP/TRAM flap, there is an additional risk of having to re-examine the blood supply to the flap.

4. **Scars** – All incisions leave permanent scars. They are minimized as much as possible and the redness will fade over time.

5. **Seroma** – Pockets of tissue fluid sometimes develop in the abdomen, back, or chest wall depending on the procedure you have. Additional procedures to drain this fluid may be necessary.

6. **Change in sensation** – There will be decreased sensation of your breast skin. This may return within a few months after your surgery. It varies with each patient. Most patients state they feel fullness/numbness under the arm following surgery, but this usually resolves with time.

7. **Asymmetry** – Breasts are never identical pre-operatively. Extensive measurements will be taken before and during surgery to create the optimal result. Some breast shapes and ptosis are harder to recreate than others. Realize you may notice some asymmetry in your bra post-op.

8. **Fat necrosis** – If undergoing DIEP/TRAM flap reconstruction, the blood supply to the fatty tissue maybe decreased and form firm areas in the reconstruction. This may have to be surgically removed.

9. **Pulmonary Complications/Blood clot** – With all longer surgical procedures, there is a slight risk of getting a blood clot in the legs that could go to the lungs. We take all precautions to prevent this from occurring. If it does occur, it may require additional hospitalization and treatment. Pulmonary emboli can be life-threatening or fatal in some circumstances. Symptoms of include chest pain, shortness or breath, coughing or blood, pain/swelling/warmth in one leg, rapid heart rate or breathing. Contact Dr. Desai immediately if this occurs.

10. **Smoking** – You must discontinue smoking and ALL nicotine products prior to your surgery. Nicotine decreases the blood flow to the skin and can result in skin loss and delayed healing.
HOSPITAL COURSE: FREE TRAM / DIEP ABDOMINAL FLAP BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

- Most patients are in the hospital 4-6 days. You will be placed in a surgical bra immediately after surgery.

- You will have 4-6 drains, leg pump/stockings, and oxygen immediately after surgery. You will be on a self-dosing pain pump after surgery. It will administer pain medication on demand. Do not be afraid to use it. You will have medication ordered for nausea that can be given at your request.

- No CAFFEINE, NICOTINE, OR SECOND HAND SMOKE for 6 weeks. We cannot offer patches because they contain nicotine.

- You will receive Lovenox shots (a blood thinner) and a daily Aspirin.

- The night of surgery – Try to walk with nursing assistance at least once to prevent a blood clot.

- Post-op Day 1 (the day after surgery)
  - Begin sitting in chair and ambulating.
  - Walk with your hips slightly bent. You will be able to stand straight in 2 weeks.
  - The flap will be monitored closely.

- Post-op Day 2
  - Begin oral pain medications if you haven’t already.

- Post-op Day 3-5
  - Diet can be advanced as tolerated.
  - If your pain is controlled, you will be discharged with pain medications and antibiotics. The drains will be left in place until your followup visit in most circumstances.

POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS: ABDOMINAL FLAP BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

Once your surgery is completed, you must follow all the instructions given to you in order to heal properly and have good outcomes.

Included are normal post-surgical experiences and key health considerations that may be a cause of concern.

TYPICAL POST-OPERATIVE SYMPTOMS

Typical symptoms of breast reconstruction and signs to watch for include the following:

**Tightness in the chest region and stiffness; Tingling, burning or intermittent shooting pain:** These are normal experiences as the skin, muscles and tissue stretch, and as sensory nerves heal. Pain medication and muscle relaxants will help you cope with any discomfort. If you have drains, you may experience additional localized discomfort. **Consistent sharp pain should be reported to our office immediately.**

**Shiny skin or any itchy feeling:** Swelling can cause the breasts’ skin to appear shiny. As the healing process advances, you may also find a mild to severe itchy feeling of the breasts. An antihistamine like Benadryl can help to alleviate severe, constant itchiness. **If the skin becomes red and hot to the touch, contact our office immediately.**

**Asymmetry, the breasts look different, or heal differently:** Breasts may look or feel quite different from one another in the days following surgery. This is normal; no two breasts are perfectly symmetrical in nature or following breast reconstruction surgery.
OUR OFFICE SHOULD BE CONTACTED IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

• A high fever, (over 101º) severe nausea and vomiting, continued dizziness or incoherent behavior
• Any pain that cannot be controlled by your pain medication.
• Bright red skin that is hot to the touch.
• Excessive bleeding or fluid seeping through the incisions.
• A severely misshapen breast or bruising that is localized to one breast or region of the chest.

Do not apply COLD compresses:

YOUR RELEASE FROM THE HOSPITAL

You will only be released to the care of a responsible adult. All of these instructions must be clear to the adult who will monitor your health and support you, around the clock in your first days home from the hospital.

Rest, but not bed rest: While rest is important in the early stages of healing, equally important is that you are ambulatory, meaning that you are walking under your own strength. Spend 10 minutes every 2 hours engaged in light walking indoors as you recover.

You will also experience difficulty standing fully upright if your donor site is from the abdominal region: Standing upright could greatly affect your results and could cause serious injury.

Recline with your head and chest slightly elevated above your lower body.

Good nutrition: Fluids are critical following surgery. Stick to non-carbonated, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free, and green tea-free beverages including fruit juices and water, milk, and yogurt drinks. You must consume at least 8 ounces of fluid every 2 hours. Stick with soft, bland, nutritious food for the first 24 hours.

Take all medication, exactly as prescribed:

Do not change your incision dressings unless there is a significant amount of fluid under the film.
If you have a drain placed in your incisions, carefully follow the instructions for drain care and record drained fluid on the Drain Care Instructions and Log.

Wear a support bra or your surgical garment around the clock. Follow the instructions specifically and wear this garment at all times.

Do not smoke. Smoking can greatly impair your safety prior to surgery and your ability to heal following surgery. You must not smoke.

Relax. Do not engage in any stressful activities or anything to raise your blood pressure. Do not lift your hands over your head. Do not lift anything heavier than a paperback book. Take care of no one, and let others tend to you.
FIVE TO TEN DAYS FOLLOWING SURGERY

During this time you will progress with each day that passes. Ease into your daily activities. You will receive clearance to begin driving or return to work after 2 weeks and after you are no longer taking pain medications:

- **Continue to cleanse wounds as directed; you may shower.** Take a warm, not hot shower. Do not take a bath. Limit your shower to 10 minutes. Do not rub your incisions.

- **Take antibiotic medications and supplements as directed.** Take pain medication and muscle relaxants only as needed. You may wish to switch from prescriptive pain medication to acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

- **Maintain daily walking.** Walking is essential every day to prevent the formation of blood clots. In addition, you may begin stretching and range of motion exercises.

- **Maintain a healthy diet.** Do not smoke. Do not consume alcohol.

TWO to FOUR WEEKS FOLLOWING SURGERY

As you resume your normal daily activities, you must continue proper care and healing.

- **Ease into light weight-bearing exercise (nothing more than one to two pounds).** However no twisting or lifting anything over your head. No tennis, golf, softball or other sports with similar swinging motions. Avoid aerobic exercise that may cause a lot of bounce.

- **Do not smoke.** While incisions may have sealed, smoking deprives your body of necessary oxygen that can result in poorly healed, wide, raised scars.

- **Continue to wear a proper support bra.** The bra you first wore following surgery may feel somewhat loose. You may replace it, however no under wires for 6 weeks. You may sleep without a bra; however a camisole with built-in shelf support can be comfortable and provides added support as you continue to heal.

- **You may sleep flat.** However do not sleep on your stomach. If you are a side sleeper, a soft pillow under your mid-back and shoulders may offer more comfort and support than a single pillow under your head.

- **Practice good sun protection.** Do not expose your breasts or back to direct sunlight. If you are outdoors, apply at least an SPF 30 to the chest area at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure.

SIX WEEKS FOLLOWING SURGERY

Healing will progress and your breasts will settle into a more final shape and position.

- **You may ease into your regular fitness routine.** However realize that your upper body may require some time to return to prior strength.

- **You may resume wearing under wires,** although these are not necessary.

- **Discomfort or tightness and tingling will resolve.** Any lingering nipple sensitivity or lack of sensation should begin to greatly improve.

- **No need to resume smoking.** You have now gone 10 weeks (4 weeks prior to surgery and 6 weeks following) without a cigarette. For your long-term health, there is no need to resume smoking.

- **Nipple and Areola reconstruction can be scheduled as advised by Dr. Desai**
YOUR FIRST YEAR

• Practice monthly breast self exam.

• Continue healthy nutrition, fitness and sun protection.

• Your scars will continue to refine. If they become raised, red or thickened, or appear to widen, contact our office. Early intervention is important to achieving well-healed scars. Scars are generally refined to fine incision lines one year after surgery.

• A one-year post surgery follow-up is required and a yearly followup is recommended. However you may call our office at any time with your concerns or for needed follow-up.

Your body will change with age. The appearance of your breasts will change too. Contact our office with any of your questions or concerns, at any time.