

## Breast Surgery - Overview

There are a few types of breast lumps that require surgical management, including both pre-cancerous changes (DCIS, LCIS, ADH, etc) and breast cancer (ductal carcinoma and lobular carcinoma). There are 2 ways breast cancer is most commonly diagnosed, on mammogram and by feeling a lump in the breast. This is a challenging diagnosis and we are here to walk through it with you.

After imaging has been performed, a biopsy is usually performed by a radiologist. This biopsy will determine whether or not you should see a surgeon. Sometimes, the reason for surgery is just to get a larger biopsy (which is called a lumpectomy). Alternatively, you are seeing us because you have a diagnosed breast cancer and this requires resection.

When we operate on breast cancer, we think about the lump itself, but we also consider the lymph nodes which are the filters that drain the breast. If the cancer has started to spread within your body, the first place it will travel is your armpit (axillary) lymph nodes. Therefore, most breast cancer surgery also includes an axillary lymph node sampling which is called a sentinel lymph node biopsy. We will explain more about this at your clinic appointment.

If you are interested to read more, please see the following trusted websites:

**You've been diagnosed with breast cancer and would like more information about the diagnosis and your expected treatment course:**

Canadian Cancer Society: <http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/breast/breast-cancer/?region=on>

Canadian Breast Cancer Network: [https://www.cbcn.ca/en/types-and-subtypes?gclid=Cj0KCQjwi7DtBRCLARIsAGCJWBpeu6a-DQQbl7\\_baOl78Cw95hD8gdCZTcaG3Kl-Zf8PLic3wb9QTkaArG9EALw\\_wcB](https://www.cbcn.ca/en/types-and-subtypes?gclid=Cj0KCQjwi7DtBRCLARIsAGCJWBpeu6a-DQQbl7_baOl78Cw95hD8gdCZTcaG3Kl-Zf8PLic3wb9QTkaArG9EALw_wcB)

Cancer Care Ontario: <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/breast-cancer>

### **What to expect after your breast surgery:**

Most breast surgery performed at RVH is outpatient surgery (you go home the same day).

We will give you a prescription for opioid pain medication, but if you take Tylenol and an anti-inflammatory medication like Advil on a regular schedule, most people only have to take a few narcotics. A suggested pain medication schedule will be given to you on the day of your surgery (see pdf on pain management).

We would advise you to have a soft sports bra that is comfortable to wear in the days after your surgery. You should not wear an underwire bra for 2 weeks after your surgery.

You should not lift anything more than 10 pounds or do any vigorous exercise with the arm and the shoulder on the side of the surgery for 4 weeks after the surgery to avoid bleeding.

Sometimes, for comfort, a tensor-style bandage is wrapped around your chest after the surgery. This can be removed to shower after 24 hours and re-applied if you find it helps with pain.

If you have a mastectomy (a complete removal of one of your breasts), you will have a flexible plastic drain under your incision. It will drain into a bulb for a few weeks and we will teach you to measure and empty it. This prevents fluid from building up in the surgical cavity. We will arrange nursing home care through CCAC for you so you have support while this drain is in.