

Understanding mastectomy: a comprehensive guide.

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Introduction

Mastectomy is a surgical procedure that involves the removal of one or both breasts, and it is often associated with the treatment of breast cancer. This life-altering surgery is a significant decision that many women face when diagnosed with breast cancer or when they carry a high risk of developing the disease. In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the various aspects of mastectomy, including its types, reasons, surgical techniques, recovery, and emotional impact. This procedure involves the removal of the entire breast tissue, including the breast itself but not the lymph nodes. It is typically performed when the cancer is in its early stages or when a woman chooses it as a preventive measure due to a high risk of breast cancer [1].

In addition to the removal of the entire breast, this procedure also includes the removal of some lymph nodes in the axillary (underarm) region. It is commonly performed when cancer has spread to the lymph nodes or when a more extensive surgery is required. This is a less common procedure today. It involves the removal of the entire breast, the axillary lymph nodes, and the chest wall muscles under the breast. This type of mastectomy is usually reserved for advanced cases of breast cancer. In cases where a woman is at a high risk of developing breast cancer in both breasts, she may opt for a double mastectomy. This involves the removal of both breasts to reduce the risk significantly. Mastectomy is a crucial treatment option for breast cancer. It may be recommended when the tumor is large, when there are multiple tumors in different areas of the breast, or when cancer has spread throughout the breast tissue [2].

Some women choose to undergo a preventive mastectomy if they have a strong family history of breast cancer or carry certain genetic mutations like BRCA1 or BRCA2, which significantly increase the risk of breast cancer. Large Non-Cancerous Tumors. In cases of large benign tumors, a mastectomy may be recommended if the tumor cannot be safely removed with other surgical methods. Mastectomy is a complex surgical procedure that requires careful planning and consideration of various factors. Surgeons may use different techniques based on the individual patient's needs and the extent of the cancer [3].

Nipple-Sparing Mastectomy: In this procedure, the breast tissue is removed while preserving the breast skin, nipple, and areola. It is an option for select patients and is typically

followed by breast reconstruction. **Axillary Lymph Node Dissection:** When lymph nodes are affected or at risk of being affected, surgeons may perform an axillary lymph node dissection alongside the mastectomy to remove and examine lymph nodes for cancer spread. Recovery from a mastectomy can be physically and emotionally challenging. Here are some key aspects of the recovery process. The length of hospitalization varies but is typically short for uncomplicated mastectomies. Patients may stay overnight or for a few days, depending on the surgical approach and individual health. Pain and discomfort are common after surgery. Medications and pain management techniques are prescribed to help alleviate this [4].

Drainage tubes are often placed during surgery to remove excess fluid from the surgical site. These drains are usually removed in the days following the procedure. Proper care of the surgical site is crucial to prevent infection. Patients are taught how to care for the incision and dressing changes. Initially, patients may need to limit arm and upper body movements. Physical therapy and exercises are often recommended to regain strength and mobility. For many women, breast reconstruction is an important part of the mastectomy journey. It aims to restore the appearance of the breast, and there are several options to consider. This involves performing breast reconstruction during the same surgery as the mastectomy. It reduces the number of surgeries required but may not be suitable for all patients. There are various methods for breast reconstruction, including breast implants, tissue expanders, and autologous tissue (using the patient's own tissue from another part of the body) [5].

Conclusion

Mastectomy is a critical procedure in the treatment and prevention of breast cancer. It involves the removal of one or both breasts and can have a profound physical and emotional impact on a person's life. It's essential for individuals facing mastectomy to have access to comprehensive information, support, and healthcare resources to make informed decisions and navigate the journey effectively. With advancements in surgical techniques and breast reconstruction options, many women can achieve physical and emotional recovery after mastectomy and continue to lead fulfilling lives.

References

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