

# Breast Surgery

**Breast Biopsy** may be performed if there is a lump you can feel in the breast or if there is an abnormality on a mammogram. The surgeon makes a small incision and removes a tissue sample for the pathologist.

**A needle-localization** may be recommended if the abnormal area is very small. In this procedure, a thin wire is placed in the breast by a radiologist in the Women's Center. This wire will guide the surgeon to the exact area to be biopsied.

**Mastectomy** is performed when a breast cancer has been diagnosed. The surgeon removes the breast in this procedure. Often lymph nodes from the armpit area are also removed. These are examined to determine whether the cancer has spread from the breast.

**Sentinel Node Biopsy** may be recommended by your surgeon. In this procedure, dye and/or a radioactive medicine are injected into the tumor prior to surgery. This can guide the surgeon to the lymph nodes that would most likely be involved. This way, less lymph tissue is removed for analysis.

## **Before the day of surgery:**

- Ask your doctor if you need to stop blood-thinning medicines like aspirin or coumadin.

## **On the day of surgery:**

- You will need to arrive 1 ½ - 2 1/2 hours before surgery. A nurse will interview you, start an IV and answer any questions you have.
- If you are having a *needle-localization*, you will be taken to the Women's Center. You will be seated for this. A mammogram will be done to guide the radiologist in placing a thin wire in the breast.

## **The procedure:**

- You will be given medicine as needed to keep you relaxed and comfortable
- The surgeon speaks to a family member after surgery, but no pathology report is usually available for a few days.
- After your procedure, you will rest for a short time. Your nurse will review doctor's written instructions with you before you leave.

## **Going home:**

- Plan to rest. Your doctor may prescribe pain medication and/or ice for discomfort.
- A responsible adult must drive you home and remain with you for 24 hours.
- Most dressings can come off in 24 hours and you can shower.
- A supportive bra helps with compression and comfort.
- May use ice for comfort or swelling.
- Call your surgeon for uncontrolled pain, severe swelling or signs of infection (fever or pus) or problems with drain tubes.
- You may go home with surgical drain tubes still in place. We will teach you how to take care of the tube and review your written instructions from the doctor.

- Breast surgery can also cause feelings of grief and anxiety. Mercy's Women's Center can help support you in a variety of ways as you recover. Please contact them.