WATERFRONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION · AFTERCARE

Gynaecomastia Surgery Aftercare

Recovery guidelines for male breast reduction (gynaecomastia) surgery based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written aftercare information. This online guide should be used alongside the official leaflet and the specific instructions given to you by your surgical team.

Typical recovery: 6 weeks initial recovery, 3–6 months for final results · Reviewed 4 July 2026 · Version 1.0

When to get help — your traffic light guide

RED

Call 999 or go to A&E now if you have:

These can be life-threatening. Do not wait to call the hospital first.

- Sudden shortness of breath or chest pain
- Leg swelling with breathing problems (possible blood clot)
- Heavy bleeding that won't stop
- High temperature (over 38°C) with confusion or unusual drowsiness

AMBER

Contact us now — do not wait — if you have:

- Temperature over 38°C with severe pain
- One side of chest suddenly much larger than the other

Office hours (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm): 0131 376 3785

Evenings and weekends during your early recovery: Out-of-Hours Nurse Advice Line 07405322689 — our nurse can advise you, contact your surgeon, or direct you to NHS services.

After your early recovery period: call the hospital in office hours, or NHS 24 on 111.

Had your surgery at Spire Shawfair Park (overnight stay)? Contact Spire directly using the number on your discharge paperwork — not the Waterfront advice line.

GREEN

Tell us at your next appointment:

Anything else that is niggling or worrying you — no concern is too small. Mention it at your next appointment, or call us during office hours.

Related Information Leaflets

Separate leaflets about the procedure itself — not the aftercare instructions above. Tap a title to download, or find them all on your procedure page in the portal.

- Gynaecomastia — BAAPS Patient Leaflet (https://waterfront-patient-portal.netlify.app/waterfrontaftercare/gynecomastia-baaps-leaflet.pdf)

How to Use This Information

The advice below is based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written male breast surgery (gynaecomastia) aftercare leaflet. It is general guidance for the average patient and may be adapted by your consultant for your individual circumstances.

Always follow the specific instructions given to you on the day of your surgery and in your printed leaflet. If there is ever a difference, follow your consultant's written or verbal instructions and contact us for clarification.

Post-Operative Checklist

- Wear compression vest 24/7 for first 4 weeks
- Keep incisions clean and dry for first 48 hours
- Take prescribed antibiotics as directed
- Avoid lifting over 5kg for 4 weeks
- Light walking from day 1
- Attend all follow-up appointments

Wound Care

- Keep dressings clean and dry for first 48 hours
- Shower carefully - OK if outer dressings get wet
- Outer dressings and paper tape removed at week 1 appointment
- Non-dissolvable stitches removed at week 1

- Gently clean incisions after first week
- Start scar massage after week 3 with bio-oil or moisturiser (micropore taping is not needed unless you had skin excision as part of your surgery — your team will tell you if so)
- Watch for signs of infection: increasing redness, yellow/green discharge, fever

Pain Management

- Take your painkillers as directed on their labels — every medicine you go home with is labelled with its dose and frequency, and your nurse will go through them with you before you leave. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together
- Take prescribed pain medication regularly as scheduled
- Compression vest helps reduce discomfort
- Some tightness and swelling is normal and expected
- Swelling peaks at days 3–5 then gradually improves
- Shooting pains (weeks 3–4) are normal - caused by nerve healing

Activity Restrictions

- No lifting over 5kg for 4 weeks
- No driving for first week or until off strong painkillers
- Light walking from day 1 (within home)
- Avoid upper body and chest exercise for 6 weeks
- Return to desk work: Week 2
- Return to physical work: Weeks 2–3 (start gradually)
- Light cardio (walking, cycling): Week 4
- Upper body exercise: Week 6
- Swimming: Week 4 (when wounds healed)
- Contact sports: Week 8 (with chest protection initially)
- Flying under 3 hours: 1 week
- Flying long-haul: about 4 weeks (UK guidance after surgery) — keep hydrated, move regularly, wear flight socks; flying sooner? discuss it with us first

Before You Leave the Hospital

- **Painkillers:** Make sure you have your painkillers before you leave — the nurse looking after you will go through them with you.

- **Compression vest:** Fitted and comfortable. Understand how to wear and care for it.
- **Follow-up appointment:** You will be given a card with details of your week 1 nurse appointment and contact details.
- **Getting home safely:** You must have someone to take you home and a **responsible adult with you for the first night**.
- **Emergency numbers:** Save the emergency contact numbers in your phone before leaving.

Compression Vest Information

A well-fitting compression vest is essential for optimal healing and final chest contour.

Why it matters: Reduces swelling, supports healing tissues, improves final contour, and provides comfort.

First 4 weeks: Wear 24 hours a day

Weeks 4–6: During day only

After 6 weeks: As comfortable

Recommended vests: Macom Gynaefix Vest (https://www.macom-medical.com/products/gynaefix-vest) or Lipoelastic MTm Comfort (https://www.lipoelastic.co.uk/mtm-comfort). Use discount code: QUABA

Your Painkillers

Every medicine you go home with is clearly labelled with its dose and how often to take it, and your nurse will go through your painkillers with you before you leave.

Take them as directed on the label. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together. If your pain isn't controlled despite taking your painkillers as directed, contact us.

✓ DO

- Wear compression vest as directed
- Walk regularly from day 1
- Sleep in whatever position is comfortable (most find their back easiest at first)
- Keep wounds clean and dry
- Eat healthy foods with fibre
- Drink plenty of water

- Massage scars after week 3
- Be patient with results

✗ AVOID

- Smoking for at least 2 weeks
- Alcohol for 3 weeks
- Heavy lifting for 4 weeks
- Chest exercises for 6 weeks
- Sun exposure on scars for 3 months
- Hot baths for 2 weeks
- Swimming until wounds healed

Scar Care

Week 3 Onwards

- **1. Daily Massage** (once wounds healed)
- Use bio-oil or plain moisturiser
- Firm circular motions
- 5 minutes twice daily
- **2. Sun Protection**
- SPF 30+ on scars
- Cover with clothing when possible
- **Scar Timeline**
- **1 month:** Pink/red, may be raised
- **3 months:** Starting to fade
- **6 months:** Significantly faded
- **12 months:** Final appearance
- **Scar Locations**
- **Around lower edge of nipple** (most common)
- **Small incisions in armpit** (if liposuction)

Understanding Your Results

What to Expect

- **Weeks 1–2:** Very swollen, bruised
- **Month 1:** 80% of swelling gone
- **Month 3:** Chest contour visible
- **Month 6:** Final result
- **Normal Findings**
- Firm lumps under nipples (soften over months)
- Different healing speed each side
- Temporary numbness
- Shooting pains (nerve regeneration)

Activity Timeline

- **Showering** — Day 1 — Gentle, pat dry
- **Driving** — Weeks 1–2 — When off strong painkillers
- **Office work** — Week 2 — As comfortable
- **Physical work** — Weeks 2–3 — Start gradually
- **Light exercise** — Week 4 — Walking, cycling
- **Upper body exercise** — Week 6 — Build up slowly
- **Swimming** — Week 4 — When wounds healed
- **Contact sports** — Week 8 — With chest protection initially
- **Flying (short)** — 1 week — Under 3 hours
- **Flying (long)** — 2 weeks — Wear compression stockings

Your Recovery, Stage by Stage

Days 1–3 — Early Recovery

Immediate post-surgery care and monitoring

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Chest pain and discomfort
- Swelling and tightness
- Bruising starting to appear

- Numbness around nipples (if gland removed)
- Some blood on dressings
- Mood changes

CARE ROUTINE

- Take painkillers regularly as prescribed
- Wear compression vest 24/7
- Sleep in whatever position is comfortable
- Walk around home every few hours
- Shower carefully (OK if outer dressings get wet)

COMFORT

- Take painkillers on schedule (don't wait for pain)
- Paracetamol and ibuprofen as directed
- Compression vest helps reduce discomfort
- Report uncontrolled pain immediately

Days 4–7 — Bruising Peaks

Bruising worsens before improving

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Bruising gets worse before better
- Swelling may increase
- One side may hurt more (normal)

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue compression vest day and night
- Increase walking gradually
- Light activities OK
- May drive at end of week if: not taking strong painkillers and can do emergency stop comfortably

COMFORT

- Continue regular pain management
- Some patients stop painkillers by end of week
- Pain should be decreasing overall

Week 1 — Nurse Appointment

First follow-up and dressing removal

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Ready for dressing and stitch removal

- Swelling still present but manageable

CARE ROUTINE

- Attend nurse appointment (end of week 1)
- Outer dressings removed
- Paper tape (steri-strips) removed
- Non-dissolvable stitches removed
- Chest examined
- Questions answered

COMFORT

- Pain reducing
- May reduce medication after appointment

Week 2 — Getting Back to Normal

Return to desk work and daily activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Some patients stop painkillers
- Bruising starting to fade
- Swelling reducing
- Feeling more energy

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue wearing compression vest
- Avoid heavy lifting
- Return to desk work possible
- Increase daily walking
- Light household tasks OK

COMFORT

- Minimal pain medication needed
- Most discomfort resolved
- Occasional discomfort with certain movements

Weeks 3–4 — Progressive Healing

Most swelling resolved, scar care begins

WHAT'S NORMAL

- 80-90% of swelling gone
- Shooting pains (nerves healing - normal)
- May feel firm lumps under nipples (will soften)

CARE ROUTINE

- Can start moisturising scars
- Begin scar massage (once wounds healed)
- Use bio-oil or plain moisturiser
- Firm circular motions, 5 minutes twice daily
- Transition compression: weeks 4–6 during day only
- Light exercise may be permitted

COMFORT

- No pain medication typically needed
- Occasional mild discomfort possible
- Shooting pains are normal and temporary

Weeks 4–6 — Approaching Normal

Resuming light exercise and activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Most swelling resolved
- Bruising mostly faded
- Feeling confident with healing
- Returning to normal activities

CARE ROUTINE

- Light cardio (walking, stationary bike)
- Lower body exercises OK
- No chest/arm exercises yet
- Continue sun protection on scars (SPF 30+)
- Can resume most normal daily activities
- Follow-up appointment around weeks 4–6

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full range of motion restored
- Contact team if any concerns arise

Months 2–3 — Final Result

Complete healing and final appearance

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Chest contour visible and settling
- Scars significantly faded

- Feeling completely normal
- Full range of motion

CARE ROUTINE

- Gradually resume all exercises
- Start with light weights
- Full exercise with surgeon approval
- Continue sun protection on scars
- Listen to your body

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Comfortable with all activities
- Full recovery achieved

Month 6 — Final Result

Optimal healing and scar maturation

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Final results visible
- Chest shape settled
- Scars well-healed and faded
- Complete return to all activities
- Confident with appearance

CARE ROUTINE

- All activities permitted
- Regular exercise including upper body
- Continue long-term care as advised
- Annual check-ups as recommended

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full recovery achieved
- Contact team if any concerns arise

Follow-Up Appointments

Week 1 (End of Week 1) — Nurse appointment to check healing and remove dressings and stitches.

- Outer dressings removed
- Paper tape (steri-strips) removed
- Non-dissolvable stitches removed
- Chest examined
- Questions answered

Further nurse reviews — as needed — Some patients need further nurse reviews. If so, the nurses will arrange these with you and will discharge you from nurse-led care once they are happy your wounds have healed.

Around 6 months — surgeon review (final follow-up) — Your surgeon will usually see you at around 6 months to assess your final result. Your surgeon is always available to review you sooner if required, and in some circumstances may wish to see you before your final follow-up.

Your appointment schedule may vary. Always follow the specific dates and times given in your appointment card. Contact us if you need to reschedule.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does my chest look worse before it looks better?
Bruising and swelling peak at days 3–5. This is completely normal and will improve daily after that. You should see significant improvement by week 2.

When can I go to the gym?
Light cardio (walking, stationary bike) at 4 weeks. Full chest exercises and upper body work at 6 weeks. Always build up gradually and listen to your body.

Is it normal to feel lumps under my nipples?
Yes — these are healing tissues and will gradually soften over 3–6 months. Gentle massage with bio-oil or moisturiser from week 3 can help the tissue feel more supple, though the softening happens with time either way.

Can I sleep on my side?
Sleep in whatever position is comfortable — most men find their back most comfortable at first, and side sleeping is fine as soon as it feels OK (often within 1–2 weeks).

When will my chest look normal?
Most swelling resolves by 4 weeks. Final shape and appearance becomes apparent around 6 months when scars have faded and all tissues have settled.

Do I really need to wear the vest all the time?

Yes — the vest is an important part of your recovery. Wearing it consistently for the first 4 weeks helps control swelling and supports the skin as it settles to your new contour. After 4 weeks, daytime wear until week 6 is typical.

When can I go swimming?

Once wounds are completely healed, usually 4 weeks. Chlorine can irritate healing wounds so it's important to wait until full healing.

I'm experiencing numbness around my nipples - is this normal?

Yes, numbness is completely normal if the gland was removed. Sensation typically returns over 3–6 months as nerves heal.