

PRE-SURGERY TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Many of our callers and their caregivers take comfort in the tips experienced Sharsheret peer supporters, called Links, have to offer. Below is a collection of suggestions from Sharsheret Links that may benefit your loved one throughout their treatment. Not everyone has the same experience, but these are some practical ways you may be able to help before surgery.

- Discuss any medications or medical equipment your loved one may need after surgery. Help her fill any prescriptions in advance and stock up on recommended equipment, such as gauze pads or topical creams.
- Purchase any sports bras your loved one may be required to wear after surgery. Bras with hooks are preferable to those you must pull on overhead. There are even special “post-mastectomy” bras available.
- Purchase loose-fitting shirts and pajamas that button in the front. It can be difficult for patients to pull clothes over their head immediately after surgery. Purchase camisoles with pockets that can hold drains to wear after surgery, so that your loved one can keep her hands free.
- Purchase a clear measuring cup that is easy to hold and to read, like the OXO® Angle Mini Measuring Cup, for your loved one to use when emptying surgical drains.

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- Consider limiting visitors in the hospital (including yourself at times) so that your loved one can recover. Remind your loved one that their role is not to entertain.
- Arrange with friends and family for any assistance your loved one might need when you return home - shopping, housekeeping, meal preparation, or babysitting. If you are leaving your loved one for the day, open jars and hard to open lids before leaving for work or school and put anything they may need at waist-height as it can be hard for her to lift her arms up. Some women even arrange for a private nurse to attend to their medical needs post-surgery.
- When traveling in a car, women have reported that putting a travel pillow between their chest and the seatbelt to gives added cushioning. There are even some “mastectomy pillows” on Etsy.
- Many swear by Lazy Boy type recliners for sitting and sleeping. If your loved one does not have one, she may want to borrow one from a friend or even rent one.
- Urge your loved one to connect with Sharsheret and consider Sharsheret Links when exploring surgery options. Many of our Links will freely discuss their choices, recuperation, and cosmetics. Also, some women find it helpful to view the results others achieved after reconstructive surgery before making their own decision.