
PATIENT GUIDE

Breast Surgery

Pre & Post-Op Guide



A clear, simple guide to help you prepare for breast surgery and care for yourself afterwards, covering what to do beforehand, the day of surgery, and your recovery.

Under the care of **Dr Brad Bidwell** · MBBS, BSc.(Hons), PhD, FRACS

Understanding breast surgery

Breast surgery covers a range of procedures, and the right one depends on your diagnosis and your goals. It may involve removing a lump with a margin of surrounding tissue (a wide local excision or lumpectomy), removing the breast (mastectomy), or checking the lymph nodes (sentinel node biopsy). Dr Bidwell will explain exactly which procedure is planned for you and why.

This guide gives general information to help you feel prepared. Your personalised plan, including the type of anaesthetic and expected recovery, will be discussed with you at your consultation, where you are welcome to ask any questions.

A note on support

Breast surgery can be an emotional time as well as a physical one. Please know that support is available at every step, and no question is too small. Bringing a family member or friend to appointments can help.

Before your surgery

GETTING READY

- At your consultation, Dr Bidwell will review your imaging and results, confirm the plan and obtain your consent.
- Tell the clinic about all medications, especially blood thinners, as some may need to be paused before surgery.
- Arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home and help you at home in the first days after surgery.

THE DAY BEFORE AND FASTING

- You will be told when to stop eating and drinking. An empty stomach is essential for a safe anaesthetic.
- For some procedures, a small marker or localisation is placed on the day of surgery to guide the operation. If this applies to you, it will be explained in advance.

What to expect

- 1. Admission.** Come to the hospital at your scheduled time, having followed your fasting instructions. A nurse will prepare you and the anaesthetic team will meet you.
- 2. The operation.** Your surgery is carried out under general anaesthetic. The length depends on the specific procedure, which Dr Bidwell will have explained beforehand.
- 3. Recovery and going home.** You will be cared for in the recovery area afterwards. Depending on your procedure you may go home the same day or stay a short time. Some patients have a small drain, and you will be shown how to care for it.
- 4. Comfort.** You will be given pain relief and clear instructions. A soft, supportive (non-wired) bra is often helpful for comfort in the early weeks.

Your recovery at home

Wound and activity. Care for your dressing as instructed and gradually resume gentle activity. Simple arm and shoulder movements, as advised, help keep your shoulder supple. Avoid heavy lifting until Dr Bidwell says it is safe.

Results and follow-up. Any tissue removed is examined in the laboratory. These results, and the next steps in your care, are discussed with you at your follow-up appointment.

When to seek help

Sedation and surgery are very safe, but contact the clinic or seek medical care promptly if, in the days afterwards, you experience:

- Increasing redness, swelling, warmth or discharge from the wound
- Fever, chills or feeling generally unwell
- Increasing pain or bleeding that does not settle
- Calf pain, swelling, chest pain or breathlessness (seek urgent care)

If symptoms are severe or you are very unwell, call 000 or go to your nearest emergency department.

Contact the clinic

If you have any questions about your preparation, procedure or recovery, please get in touch, and the team will be happy to help.

Practice	Wangaratta General Surgeons
Location	Wangaratta Private Hospital, 134 Templeton Street, Wangaratta VIC 3677
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This guide provides general information only and is not a substitute for personalised medical advice. Always follow the specific instructions given to you by Dr Bidwell and the clinic.