

Wide Local Excision

B03 Lite - Expires end of January 2025



This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is breast cancer?

What is a wide local excision?

A wide local excision involves removing the cancer with a rim of breast tissue around the cancer. Your surgeon will tell you if your nipple needs to be removed. As well as removing your breast tissue, your surgeon may remove glands (lymph nodes) in your armpit to find out if there are any cancer cells in them.

What are the benefits?

Removing the cancer by surgery gives you the best chance of being free of early breast cancer. The breast tissue and lymph nodes that your surgeon removes will be examined under a microscope to help decide on any further treatment.

Are there any alternatives?

You may want to consider a mastectomy (removing all your breast).

If you have invasive breast cancer, where the cancer has grown through the ducts to the surrounding breast tissue, there are other treatments available such as hormone therapy, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and biological therapy.

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure is usually performed under a general anaesthetic but various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The procedure usually takes about an hour.

Your surgeon will make a cut on your breast. They will remove the cancer with a rim of breast tissue around the cancer.

Your surgeon will usually remove any lymph nodes from your armpit through the same cut or through another cut closer to your armpit.

All your breast tissue and lymph nodes removed will be examined under a microscope. If there are cancer cells near the edge of the tissue that was removed, your surgeon may recommend another wide local excision or a mastectomy.

What complications can happen?

Some may be serious and can even be life threatening.

General complications of any procedure

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical wound
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Venous thromboembolism
- Chest infection

Specific complications of this procedure

- Developing a lump under your wound caused by fluid collecting
- Developing a lump under your wound caused by blood collecting
- Developing a hard lump in a breast caused by scarring or damaged fat tissue
- Dissatisfaction with breast appearance over time
- Stiff shoulder
- Numbness or continued pain around your armpit or the inner part of your arm
- Arm weakness or swelling of your arm and hand
- Surgery to redo the excision (re-excision)

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Scarring of your skin, which may be unsightly

What happens after the procedure?

You are expected to go home the same day.

You should be able to build up to normal activities after 2 to 3 weeks.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the breast-care team or your GP for advice.

The breast tissue and lymph nodes that your surgeon removed will have been examined under

a microscope. Your surgeon will tell you the results and discuss with you any treatment or follow-up care you need. They will also check your wound and be able to tell you when you can return to work.

Summary

A wide local excision involves removing the cancer with a rim of breast tissue around the cancer. It usually involves removing some of the lymph nodes in your armpit, which helps your surgeon to decide on any further treatment.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Acknowledgements

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Illustrator

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