

Nitroglycerin Ointment After Breast Cancer Surgery

Nitroglycerin ointment is a medicine used on your skin to increase the blood flow to an area of your body after breast cancer surgery. This ointment may be used around a tissue flap or a reconstructed nipple.

It may be hard to find nitroglycerin ointment at your local pharmacy. The hospital's outpatient pharmacy has this ointment, so we suggest you fill your prescription before you leave the hospital.

How often do I use the nitroglycerin ointment?

Use the ointment _____ times each day every _____ hours until your doctor tells you to stop. If you forget to put the ointment on one day, **do not** increase the amount you use the next day.

How do I use my nitroglycerin ointment?

Your ointment will come in a tube or as individual packets. It is important to use the ointment exactly as ordered by your doctor. Your nurse will teach you how to use the ointment before you leave the hospital. The ointment may also come with measurement paper that you can use to help you measure out the right amount of ointment.

Steps to apply:

1. Use soap and water or disinfecting wipes to clean off a work area, such as a tabletop.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

2. Gather your supplies.
 - ▶ Nitroglycerin ointment
 - ▶ Clean, disposable gloves
 - ▶ 1 petroleum jelly gauze pad (xeroform) for each area
 - ▶ 1 abdominal pad for each area
 - ▶ Clean paper towels
 - ▶ Ointment measurement paper, if available
3. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Rinse and towel dry.
4. Put on clean, disposable gloves.
5. Open your surgical bra, if wearing one.
6. Use a clean paper towel gently wipe off any ointment that is on your skin.
7. Put on a thin layer of ointment to the discolored areas as you were told by your doctor or nurse. **DO NOT** put ointment on any areas that are normal in color or on the flap tissue.
8. After you put on the ointment:
 - ▶ Cover the area with a petroleum jelly gauze pad (xeroform).
 - ▶ Cover the xeroform with an abdominal pad.
 - ▶ Put on your surgical bra.
9. Take off your gloves and throw them away. Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Rinse and towel dry.

What special precautions do I need to follow?

Use the nitroglycerin ointment exactly as ordered by your doctor. **Do not** use more ointment than directed. Using too much ointment can cause serious health conditions.

It is important to follow these guidelines when you use nitroglycerin ointment:

- Keep the ointment away from children and pets and **do not** share it with anyone.
- **Do not** swallow the ointment.
- **Before you use the ointment**, tell your doctor if you have a history of heart disease or heart problems.

What side effects will I have?

This ointment may cause headaches. If needed, you can use over-the-counter pain medicine to help with this problem.

- Take 650 mg acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 6 hours.
- **Do not** take more than 3,000 mg of acetaminophen in a 24 hour period.
- **Do not** take acetaminophen if you are taking other acetaminophen pain medicines such as Percocet, Vicodin, or Norco.

If your headaches do not go away, after you take pain medicine, call your surgeon's office.