

## Mastectomy/Breast Removal

At UW Medicine we offer a range of procedures for breast removal or “top surgery,” including double mastectomy, keyhole, and liposuction. During your consult appointment with the surgeon, you will discuss your desired surgical outcomes, individual health needs, physical attributes (size of breast, scarring profile, etc.), and what surgical techniques would be best suited for you and your goals.

Most procedures are done as outpatient surgery, and you will go home the same day. After your surgery, you will wear a compression garment for several weeks, and can expect to return to most normal activities within six weeks.

### Double Mastectomy

Gender-affirming mastectomy is a type of surgery that removes breast tissue, tightens the skin, and can adjust areola/nipple placement to provide a masculine or gender-affirming chest.

### Keyhole

The Keyhole technique is a procedure that removes breast tissue with liposuction through a small incision made along the areola. The areola and nipple are left intact, and nerve sensation is maintained. The nipple may be resized if desired.

## Outcome Considerations

When considering breast removal, here are some things to discuss with your surgeon:

1. The size of your breast/chest can impact the surgical technique available for the best results. The keyhole procedure is typically considered for those who are smaller chested, but for those who are medium to larger chested, mastectomy is likely the best surgical option.
2. When areola or nipple placement is adjusted, a reduction in or loss of nerve sensation in those sites can occur.
3. You will have scarring from the surgical incisions, which will improve over time post-operatively. If you are someone who generally sees their scars become thicker and raised after an injury (keloid scars), then it is likely to occur at your incision sites.
4. While our surgeons are committed to creating excellent aesthetic outcomes, every individual’s anatomy is different, and no two chests are exactly alike. Post-operative

results and surgical complications will also vary by individual, and some may need a secondary surgery or revision to address surgical complications that could arise.

We encourage you to ask questions during your appointment. We recommend writing down your questions ahead of time, so you do not forget to ask anything.

## Medical Requirements Prior to Surgery

### Cessation of smoking and nicotine

If you use **tobacco products**, we will have you **stop all tobacco products (including vape pens) for at least 8 weeks before the date of your surgery and 6 weeks after your surgery**. Tobacco products cause constriction (squeezing) of delicate blood vessels and can have a negative impact on healing around the time of major surgeries. We know that quitting is much easier said than done, but this is a critically important piece of your successful course. Please let your surgical team know if we can provide any resources to help support you in your efforts to quit. Nicotine gum and patches are safe and effective to use during this window. **We will have you complete a urine test to double check you are tobacco free 2 weeks before your surgery date**; this urine test is asked of all patients undergoing a major reconstructive surgery and is performed to ensure your safety and readiness to heal after this large surgery. Second-hand smoke exposure should also be avoided.

If you use **marijuana products**, we will have you stop any smoking of marijuana (including vape pens) for **at least 6 weeks before the date of your surgery**. This is to make sure your airway is in the best condition for a long procedure under anesthesia, so that we can minimize the risk that you have any lung issues when going to sleep or waking up. Edibles and other forms of marijuana administration can be used during this 6 week preoperative period (but not within 24 hours before surgery).

Please consult your primary care or medical provider for cessation support, or visit the [Washington Department of Health's Quit Tobacco Help](#) website or call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** (1-800-784-8669).

### Controlled Medical and Mental Health

Any surgery is a challenge to your body, and you should be in the best physical condition you can be before surgery. This includes physical fitness, management of blood pressure and diabetes if those are concerns. We do not have a specific exclusionary BMI limitation (BMI cutoff) – we will discuss surgical options, medical risk, and anticipated outcomes with each patient on a case-by-case basis. As healing and risk of infection can be impacted by diabetes, we recommend seeing your primary care provider within one year of surgery to monitor and manage any additional medical concerns. Mental health and wellness are essential to surgical planning and post-op recovery. All mental health conditions need to be reasonably controlled

to meet surgical readiness requirements, we recommend seeing your mental health provider within one year of surgery to monitor and manage any additional mental health concerns.

## Medical and Legal Prerequisites for Surgery

[Washington state law](#) prevents insurance discrimination based on gender identity and in 2021 Washington State passed [Senate Bill 5313](#), prohibiting health insurers from denying or limiting coverage for [gender-affirming treatment](#) when that care is prescribed to an individual on the basis of a protected gender expression or identity, is medically necessary, and is prescribed in accordance with *WPATH accepted standards of care*.

UW Medicine adheres to the standards of care determined by the [World Professional Association of Transgender Health \(WPATH\)](#) and required for coverage through Washington State based insurance plans. All gender-affirming surgeries must meet the below standards of care and have this documented by both a primary care provider and mental health provider(s), regardless of insurance coverage and payment. All gender-affirming health providers are required to follow WPATH standards of care that include provider letters, without exception.

**All Gender-Affirming Surgeries** require the following WPATH guidelines to be met, regardless of insurance coverage or payment. While insurance coverage for gender-affirming care generally mirrors the WPATH requirements, individual insurance companies may have their own requirements and they can vary across states and coverage plans.

Before beginning the process of scheduling a consult appointment with a surgeon, UW Medicine will require:

1. You have a diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria, Gender Incongruence (ICD 10 code - F64.0) by a mental health or medical provider. Without the above diagnosis, gender-affirming surgical care cannot be provided by any medical provider.
2. A referral for gender-affirming surgery from your primary care provider or medical provider managing your hormone replacement therapy (HRT), if applicable. One referral is needed for each surgery requested and cannot be used for multiple surgeries. A gender-affirming surgery referral can be faxed to 206-520-3104.
  - A referral for surgery must include:
    - Confirmation of a Gender Dysphoria, Gender Incongruence (ICD 10 code - F64.0) diagnosis.
    - Clear description of the surgery you need (e.g. “mastectomy” or “masculinizing top surgery”). Referral for “gender-affirming surgery” is not descriptive enough.
    - Supporting medical documentation if appropriate

- A letter of surgical support from your **primary care provider or medical provider managing your hormone replacement therapy (HRT)** if applicable. [Primary care provider letter requirements and template](#)

## Before your consult appointment we will need:

3. **One** Letter from a **licensed mental health provider** affirming readiness for surgery. This can be written by any licensed Psychiatrist, Psychologist, therapist (MFT), counselor (LPC, LMHCA, LMHC), social worker (LICSW, LCSW, LSWAIC), etc. Please fax signed letters to 206-520-3104.
  - Mental Health assessment letters are often only valid for 12 months. Establishing care with a MH provider early is recommended, so that a request for them to write and sign a letter closer to your consult won't delay your appointment or require you get the letters re-dated and signed further into the process.
  - Mental health letters **must specify the surgical procedure** being requested (one procedure per letter, cannot specify multiple surgeries), and **be dated and hand signed by the provider**. [Licensed mental health provider letter requirements and template](#)

## Surgical Wait Times and Care Locations

### Wait Times

We have received an overwhelming number of referrals for gender-affirming surgical care and are working to reduce these wait times, but like many other gender-affirming programs throughout the country, **most procedures have a minimum wait of 1 year before the first consult appointment.**

### How To Best Stay Connected for Updates and Scheduling

The best way to contact and send us messages or questions is to sign up for UW Medicine's MyChart, which starts an electronic health record for you. After starting a MyChart account, you will be able to enter your personal and medical information, send questions to staff, approve medical records be sent from outside providers to UW Medicine, upload letters and medical documents, view referral updates, etc.

- Please [sign up for MyChart here](#) so we can share information and respond to your questions quickly.

# UW Medicine

- **If your insurance changes during this process, please let us know as soon as possible to avoid any delays.**

## Surgical and Clinic Sites

Surgeries will be performed at [Harborview Medical Center](#) or the [UW Medical Center - Northwest](#) depending on the soonest availability.

New patient consultations and follow-up appointments will be scheduled in one of our Plastic Surgery clinics. Depending on which provider you are scheduled with; you will go to one of the following clinics:

- [Burn and Plastic Surgery Clinic at Harborview](#)
- [Center for Reconstructive Surgery at UW Medical Center - Montlake](#)

## Questions? Contact Us at

UW Medicine's Transgender and Gender Non-Binary Health Program

Phone: 206-597-0700

Fax: 206-520-3104

E-mail: [tgnbhealthprogram@uw.edu](mailto:tgnbhealthprogram@uw.edu)

Office Hours: 8:00 am – 4:00 pm, Monday thru Friday (excluding Holidays)