Your stitches will usually be dissolvable or will be taken out in clinic.

RETURN TO WORK
The amount of time you need off work will vary depending on how physical your job is. Most people will need a minimum of 1-2 weeks, however your Surgeon/Clinical Nurse Specialist will be able to give you further advice. They will be able to give you further advice. Your GP will be able to supply you with a sick certificate should you need.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU NEED ADVICE

WITHIN WORKING HOURS: (mon-fri 9-3pm)
The Breast Care Nurses.
Wendy Bannister 01895 279794
Nadine Teuton 01895 279738
Terry-Anne Leeson 01895 279711

OUT OF WORKING HOURS (evenings, weekends)
Please telephone the main hospital switchboard on 01895 238282 and ask to speak to staff on the ward where you stayed.
Further information is also available on the following websites:
www.cancerbacup.org.uk
www.breastcancercare.org.uk
Pub The Breast Care Nurses/N.T 2016

This refers to the removal of one or two sentinel lymph nodes under your arm. It is performed in order to establish if there are any cancer cells in your lymph nodes, and therefore helps to determine your treatment plan. The procedure involves having a very small dose of radio-active material into the breast whilst you are awake, this takes place in the x-ray department. You will then return to the ward for a couple of hours until the injected material has had time to travel to your lymph nodes. The X-ray team will then scan your armpit and take a picture of the sentinel nodes, this takes approximately 40 minutes. Once completed you will then go to theatre where you will be anaesthetised. Your surgeon will then inject a blue dye into your breast, this travels to the nodes making them more visible, a Geiger counter is also used to help locate the radioactive sentinel nodes, so that they can be removed. The blue dye will leave a mark on your breast which can be present for approximately 3 months.

The lymph system body is made up of lymphatic vessels (similar to blood vessels) and the lymph nodes extend throughout your body. The lymph system acts by returning fluid (mainly water) from the tissues back into your blood system. The lymph glands or nodes act as a filter against unwanted materials such as bacteria and therefore help to prevent infection.
There is a failure rate of approximately 5% with this procedure as occasionally cancer cells can bypass the sentinel node.
LYMPHOEDEMA
In the past many nodes would have been removed causing an increased risk of developing lymphoedema—(swelling caused by a build up of lymph fluid in the tissues of your arm). By having only the sentinel nodes removed the risk of lymphoedema is unknown but should be extremely small. However, it is still advisable to follow this advice.

To help prevent lymphoedema you can:
- Exercise your arm. You will receive an exercise sheet during your hospital stay
- Look after your skin by gentle applying moisturiser daily
- If you notice a rash or your arm becomes red and painful contact your G.P or Clinical Nurse Specialist in case you need antibiotics
- Treat any scratches cuts or insect bites. Wash the area immediately, keep clean and apply antiseptic cream
- Use insect repellent
- Wear gloves and long sleeves when gardening
- Wear gloves when washing up
- Avoid getting sunburnt on your arm, use sun cream
- Wherever possible have any injections, blood tests and blood pressure taken in your unaffected arm
- Be careful when removing unwanted underarm hair. Use an electric razor or hair removing cream
- Avoid constricting your arm, for example wearing tight jewellery or watches
- Avoid long periods of strenuous exercise, for example pushing and pulling or heavy lifting.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Infection- As with any operation there is a small risk of infection. Should your wound become red/hot and feel more painful you should contact your Breast Care Nurse or GP as soon as possible.

Pain- You may also experience pain/discomfort/bruising/swelling around the wound site. You will be given a supply of painkillers to take home.

Allergic Reaction to Blue dye- This is extremely rare, if you have any allergies please tell your Surgeon. If an allergic reaction does occur it may be necessary to abandon your operation.

Seroma- A seroma is a collection of fluid beneath the wound. This fluid is usually re-absorbed by the body over time. However, if it causes discomfort then please call your Clinical Nurse Specialist Nurse, as it may be necessary to draw off the fluid with a needle and syringe. This procedure is usually quite painless because the surrounding tissue feels numb.

BATHING
You may bath or shower but try to keep your dressing dry. Unfortunately you will not be able to use deodorant until your wound has healed. Your Surgeon or Clinical Nurse Specialist will advise you at your post op appointment.

DRIVING
It is advisable not to drive until you have been seen in outpatients but can usually take around 1-2 weeks until you will feel comfortable to drive.

FOLLOW UP
You will be given an outpatient appointment for 7 - 10 days after your operation. Please bring a friend or relative with you. The result of your lymph nodes will be given to you at this appointment. PLEASE NOTE: If your sentinel lymph node has been found to contain some cancer cells then you will require a second operation to remove more lymph nodes.