What hospital process can I expect?

All patients are asked to arrive 1 ½ to 3 hours prior to their scheduled surgery time in order to be safely prepared for surgery. When you arrive for your surgery, you will register at Central Registration on the second level- Atrium. Once you are registered, you will be asked to change into a hospital gown and housecoat (provided).

A nurse will then check your vital signs, height and weight. Your health history will also be reviewed. You may or may not be given medications ordered by your surgeon and an intravenous (IV) may also be started. The IV is for medications that may be required before and during your surgery. You will then return to the waiting area to join your family/friend until called to the operating room. You will be called by name and taken to the operating room waiting area. At this point you will meet the anesthesiologist who will be in charge of your care during the surgery. An operating room nurse will also come out to meet you and accompany you to the operating room.

Following the procedure you will be taken to the Post Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU) where you will be monitored closely. When you are awake and stable you will be transferred to Surgery Recovery. Your friend/family will then be able to join you prior to going home. You both will be given specific instructions to follow at home before you are discharged.

http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/diagnosis/lymph_nodes

https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/diagnosis-staging/staging/sentinel-node-biopsy-fact-sheet#q8
What is a Sentinel Lymph Node?
A sentinel lymph node is defined as the lymph node to which cancer cells are most likely to spread from a primary tumor. Sometimes there can be more than one sentinel lymph node. Breast cancer cells are most likely to spread first to lymph nodes located in the axilla, or armpit area, next to the affected breast.

What is a sentinel lymph node biopsy?
A sentinel lymph node biopsy (SLNB) is a procedure in which the sentinel lymph node is identified, removed, and examined to determine whether cancer cells are present. A negative SLNB result suggests that cancer has not developed the ability to spread to nearby lymph nodes or other organs. A positive SLNB result indicates that cancer is present in the sentinel lymph node and may be present in other nearby lymph nodes (called regional lymph nodes) and, possibly, other organs. This information can help a doctor determine the stage of the cancer (extent of the disease within the body) and develop appropriate treatment plans.

How is Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy Performed?
The day before or the morning of your surgery you will go to Nuclear Medicine in Imaging Services at RVH. A radiology technician will inject a small dose of the radioactive tracer in a series of 4 needles around the tumor or melanoma. A series of pictures will be taken over the next ½ hour to 2 hours that will show the pathways the lymph fluid takes. This will guide your surgeon in identifying the sentinel lymph node. When you are in the operating room and are asleep, your surgeon injects a blue dye, near the tumor to locate the position of the sentinel lymph node. The surgeon then uses a device that detects radioactivity to find the sentinel node or looks for lymph nodes that are stained with the blue dye. Once the sentinel lymph node is located, the surgeon will remove the nodes. The sentinel lymph node biopsy is usually done at the same time the primary tumor is removed.

The sentinel lymph node(s) are sent to the pathologist. The surgeon will discuss the results with you at a later date.

What are the Side Effects of a Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy?
- It is normal to have some pain and discomfort following the procedure. This will be treated with medication. When you go home it is important to take your pain medication as prescribed by your surgeon.
- There may be mild discomfort or burning associated with the injections of the tracer and the blue dye into the breast tissue surrounding the tumor.
- Allergic reactions to the blue dye are very rare.
- The blue dye that is injected will turn the urine green for about 24 hours and may cause a temporary bluish discoloration of the skin.
- It’s important to drink lots of fluids (2 to 3 litres per day) after your procedure.
- The levels of radiation are very low as only a small amount of radioactive material is injected. There are no long-term effects from the injections and there is no danger to the people you are in contact with.