

Exercise Program Following Breast Cancer Surgery

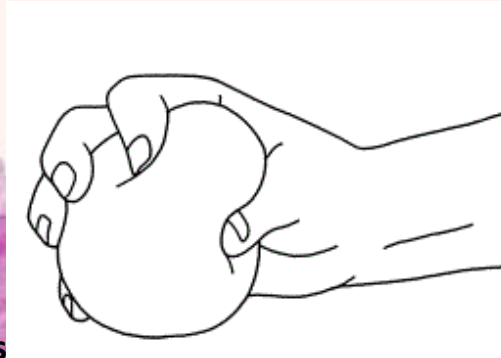
- An exercise guide for patients who have had a Lumpectomy or Mastectomy

Start with exercises 1 to 6 on the first day after surgery:

If you have a drain, they are safe to do while the drain is still in.

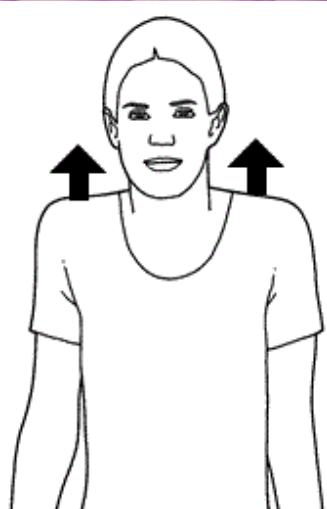
1. Making a fist - ball squeezes

- Open and close your fist 10 times every hour during the day.
- Try using a soft squeeze ball or sponge.



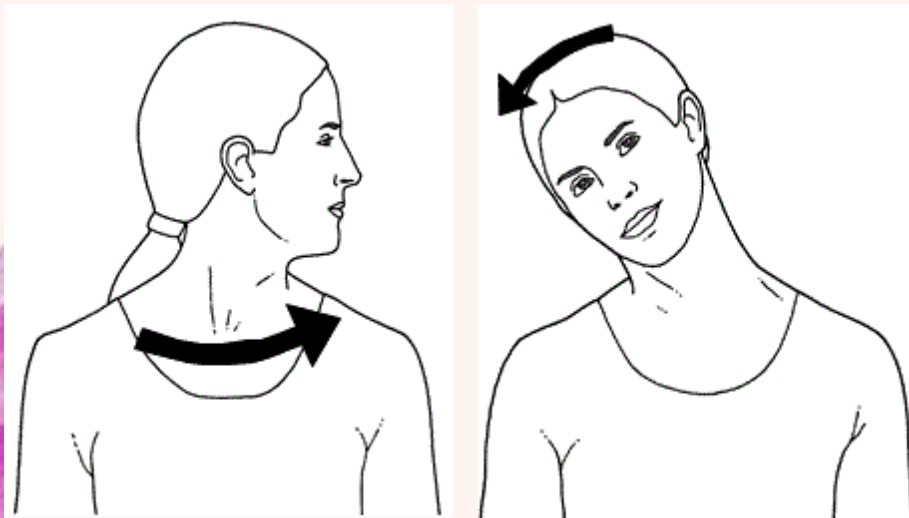
2. Shoulder shrugs

- Sit upright in a comfortable position.
- Raise your shoulders up towards your ears, bring your shoulder blades together at the back
- Lower your shoulders, and relax.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times



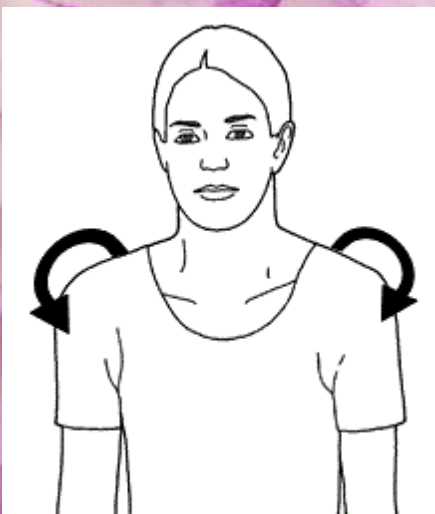
3. Head turning and tilting

- Stretch your neck as tall as possible, while keeping your chin in.
- Turn your head slowly, looking over each shoulder as far as you comfortably can.
- Tilt your head to one side and then the other, bringing your ear as close to your shoulder as you comfortably can.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.



4. Shoulder circles

- Begin by making small, slow forward circles with your shoulder. Make sure you are moving your shoulder and not your elbow.
- Slowly increase the size of the circles as you are able.
- Reverse the direction of the circles and repeat steps A and B.



5. External arm rotation

- A. Sit or stand.
- B. Keep your upper arms and elbows close to your sides and elbows at right angles.
- C. Turn your forearms outwards while keeping your elbows at your side.
- D. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



6. Pendulum

- A. Bend over and use your unaffected hand to support yourself on a table.
- B. Swing your affected arm (like a pendulum) from left to right and back.
- C. Then, swing your whole arm forward and back.
- D. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

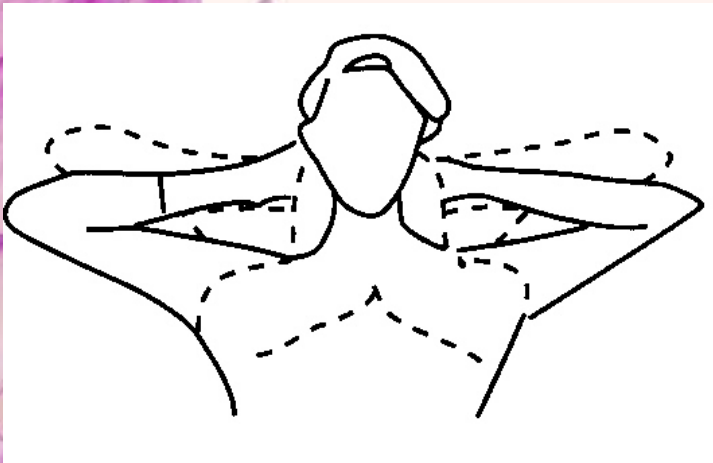


Start exercises 7 to 13 once your drain is removed. If you don't have a drain, start them 4 days after your surgery. These exercises are important to try to get back the full use of your shoulder.

7. Elbow push-back

This exercise helps increase the movement in the front of your chest and shoulders. You can do this exercise standing up against a wall or lying down on your back on a bed or the floor.

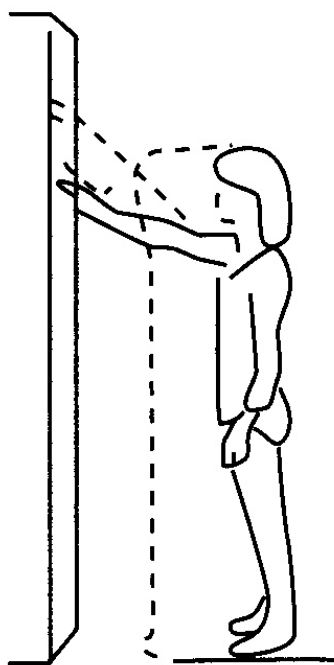
- A. Place your fingers behind your head or your upper neck.
- B. Spread your elbows out to the side as far as possible
- C. When you get to the point where you feel a good stretch (but not pain), take 3 to 5 deep breaths and hold the stretch. Keep your neck straight and relaxed as you do this.
- D. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



8. Shoulder flexion wall exercise

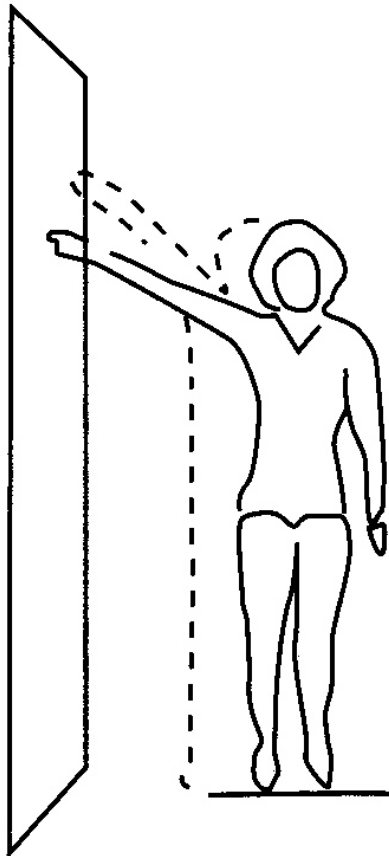
This exercise helps increase the forward movement of your shoulder. Try to reach a little higher each time. As you improve, move your feet and body closer to the wall.

- A. Stand facing a wall.
- B. Slide or walk your fingers up the wall as far as possible. When you get to the point where you feel a good stretch (but not pain), take 3 to 5 deep breaths and hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
- C. Return to the starting position by walking your fingers back down the wall.
- D. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



9. Shoulder side lifts wall exercise

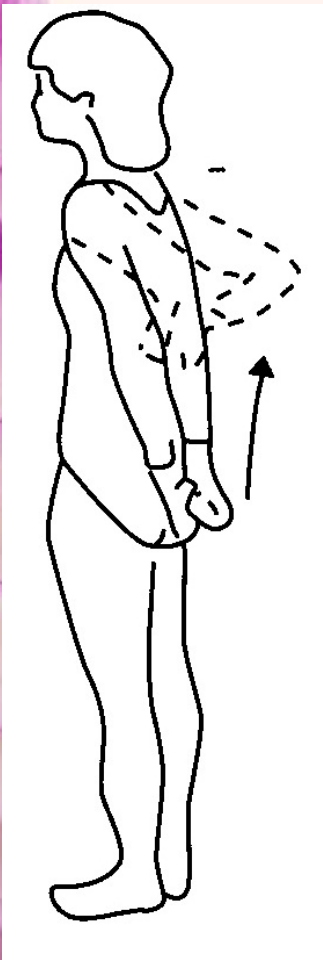
- A. Turn sideways with your affected side toward the wall.
- B. Slide or walk your fingers up the wall as far as possible. When you get to the point where you feel a good stretch (but not pain), take 3 to 5 deep breaths and hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
- C. Return to the starting position by walking your fingers back down the wall.
- D. Repeat 5 to 10 times.
- E. Try to reach a little higher each time. As you improve, move your feet and body closer to the wall.



10. Back climb exercise

This exercise helps you improve the movement behind your back. You need this for activities such as hooking your bra, buttoning up a blouse, or zipping up a dress. You can do this exercise sitting or standing.

- A. Place your hands behind your back holding your surgery-side hand.
- B. Slowly slide your hands up the centre of your back as far as possible. When you get to the point where you feel a good stretch (but not pain), take 3 to 5 deep breaths and hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
- C. Lower your hands slowly.
- D. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



11. Forward lifting

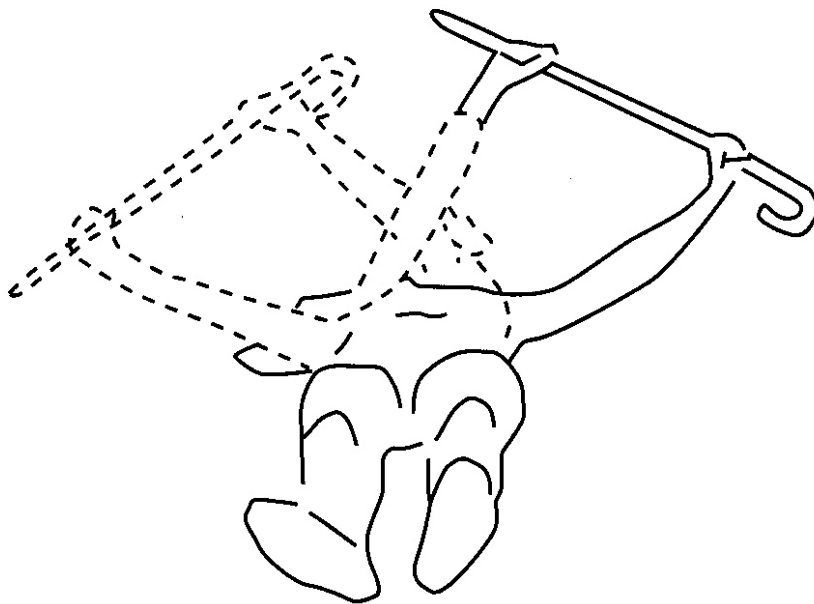
This exercise helps increase the forward movement of your shoulders.

- A. Lie on your back and hold a stick with both hands, palms down and arms shoulder width apart.
- B. Keeping your elbows straight, lift the stick over your head as far as you can. Use your unaffected arm to help lift the stick until you feel a stretch in your surgery-side arm.
- C. Hold the stretch for 3 to 5 deep breaths.
- D. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



12. Lifting to side

- A. Lie on your back and hold the stick with both hands, palms down and arms shoulder width apart.
- B. Lift the stick up in front of you.
- C. Move the stick toward the side that you had your surgery.
- D. When you begin to feel a stretch in your surgery-side arm, hold the stretch for 3 to 5 deep breaths.
- E. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



13. Chest wall stretch

- A. Stand facing a corner with your toes about 8 to 10 inches from the corner.
- B. Bend your elbows and put your forearms on the wall, one on each side of the corner.
Your elbows should be as close to shoulder height as possible.
- C. Keep your arms and feet in place and move your chest toward the corner. You will feel a stretch across your chest and shoulders.
- D. Hold the stretch for 3 to 5 deep breaths.
- E. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



How can scar massage help?

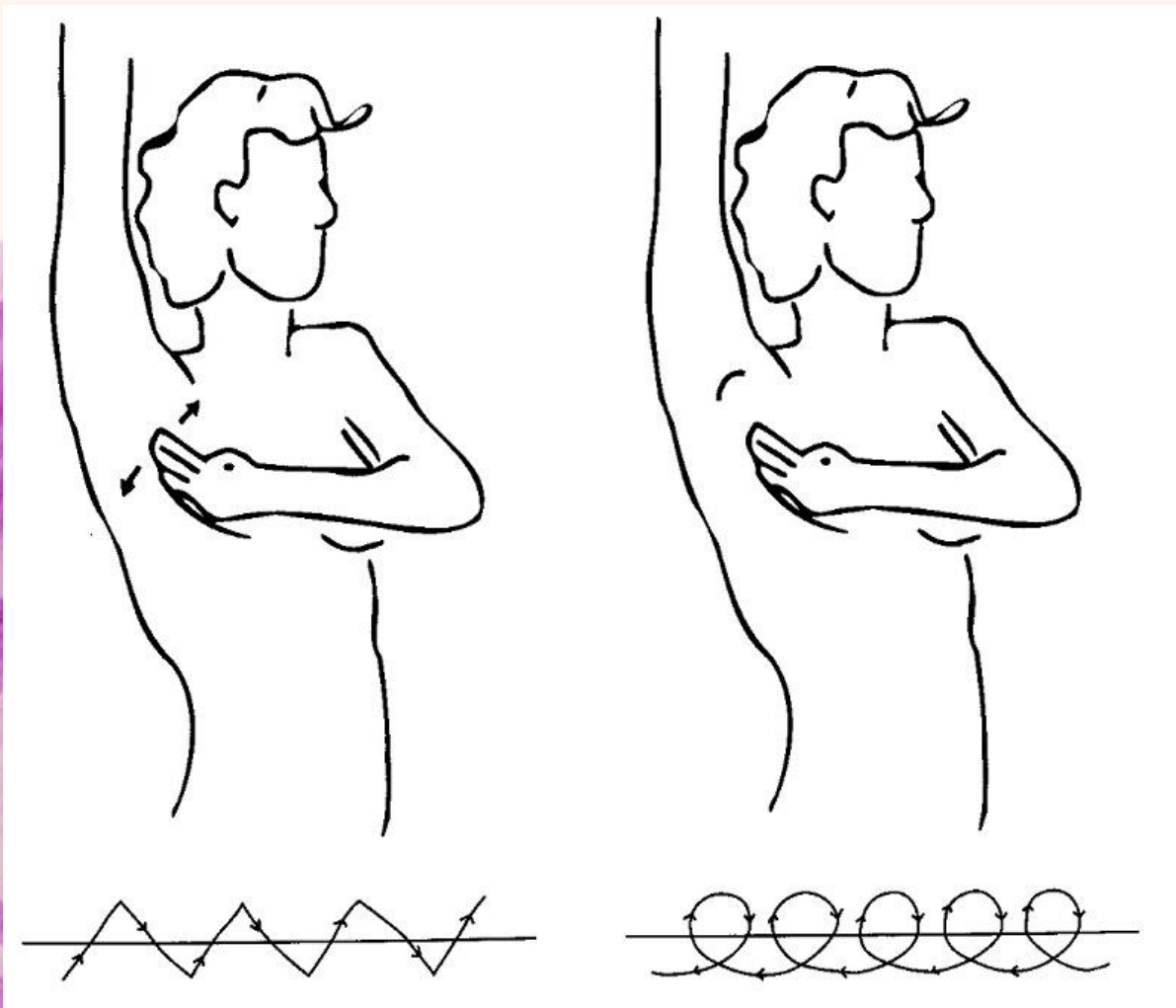
Scar massage is another way to help your shoulder get back its full range of motion and function.

Begin scar massage after your incisions (cuts) are completely healed and your drains are removed. This is usually about **3 weeks after surgery**.

You may find that your scar feels very sensitive, tight or itchy. Scar massage can help improve any sensitivity, tightness or itchiness you feel. It will help soften and loosen the scar and get the movement in your shoulder back more quickly.

To massage your scar:

1. Put a small amount of vitamin E lotion to your scar area. Before radiation, please talk to your radiation oncologist about using vitamin E.
2. Place 2 fingers or your thumb on the scar.
3. Press firmly but gently along your scar in an up and down zig-zag pattern. Move in 1 direction and then back in a circular motion.
4. Do this 2 to 3 times a day for about 10 minutes.



Do scar massage **before** you do the exercises. If you're not sure you are doing it correctly, ask your surgery nurse, physical or occupational therapist.

Remember: If you have any questions or concerns, you can talk to your Surgeon or your Physiotherapist.

Breast Diagnostic Assessment Program



Community resources

Canadian Cancer Society

☎Phone: (905) 845-5231

Address: 760 Pacific Rd #7, Oakville, ON L6L 6M5

☎Website: www.cancer.ca

Wellspring

☎Phone: 905-257-1988

Address: 2545 Sixth Line, Oakville, ON L6H 7V9

☎Website: www.wellspring.ca

Lymphedema Association of Ontario

☎Phone: (416) 410-2250

Address: Suite 101, 330 Bronte St S, Milton, ON L9T 7X1

☎Website: <https://lymphontario.wildapricot.org/>

Find a Physiotherapist:

☎ Website: <http://publicregister.collegept.org/PublicServices/Start.aspx>

Adapted from the “Functional Rehab After Breast Cancer Surgery (form D5590)” with permission from the University Health Network Patient and Family Education Program

