

Department of
PHYSIOTHERAPY



Exercises After Breast Surgery



Introduction

Shoulder and arm exercises after breast surgery are very important to prevent joint stiffness and muscle tightness. It is also important to look after your at-risk arm after surgery.

Here are some tips for you to take note of during your exercise.

DO'S 	DON'TS 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take prescribed painkillers before exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perform jerky movements during exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perform exercises regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue if you feel any severe pain or discomfort during or after exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gentle stretching (mild pain may be expected during exercise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring arm of operated side above shoulder level whilst drains are still in place.

Note

- Consult your physiotherapist before beginning any exercise
- Consult your doctor if you experience severe pain for more than 1 day

Exercises From Day 1 to 14 After Surgery

Squeezing Exercise



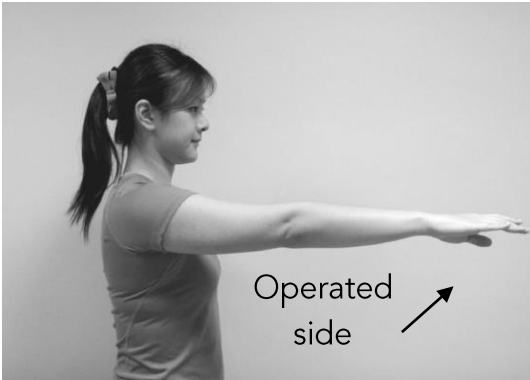
1. Start by holding a squeeze ball
2. Squeeze the ball as hard as possible, but comfortably without pain
3. Hold for 5 seconds and relax your hand
4. Repeat ___ times, ___ times per day.

Pectoralis Stretch (Lying)



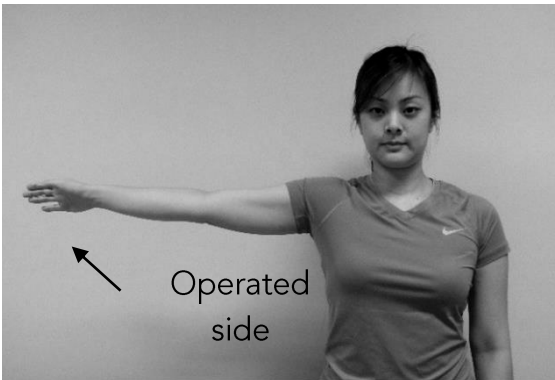
1. Start with lying on your back
2. Position the arm of your operated side with palm facing up, as shown
3. Keep your upper arm of the operated side at shoulder level
4. Hold for ___ seconds/minutes and relax your arm
5. Repeat ___ times, ___ times per day

Shoulder Flexion



1. Start in a sitting or standing position
2. Lift up the arm of your operated side forward to your shoulder level
3. Lower your arm
4. **DO NOT** raise or shrug shoulder
5. Repeat ___ times, ___ times per day

Shoulder Abduction



1. Start in a sitting or standing position
2. Lift up the arm of your operated side sideways to your shoulder level
3. Lower the arm
4. **DO NOT** raise or shrug shoulder
5. Repeat ___ times, ___ times per day

Hands Behind Back Stretch



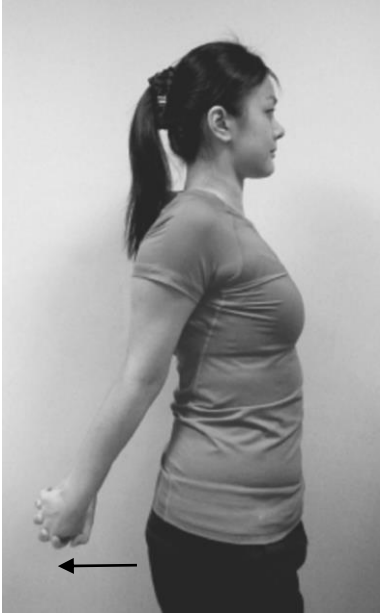
1. Start in a sitting or standing position
2. Clasp both hands behind back with the elbow out to the side
3. Gentle move both hands up your back, bending only at the elbow
4. Hold for ____ seconds and lower your arms
5. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

Towel Stretch



1. Start in a sitting or standing position
2. Hold the towel behind your back with the hand of your operated side below, and the hand of your non-operated side above
3. Keeping a good posture, slowly pull the towel upwards until a stretch is felt at the shoulder of your operated side.
4. Hold for ____ seconds and relax both hands
5. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

☐ Shoulder Anterior Structure Stretch



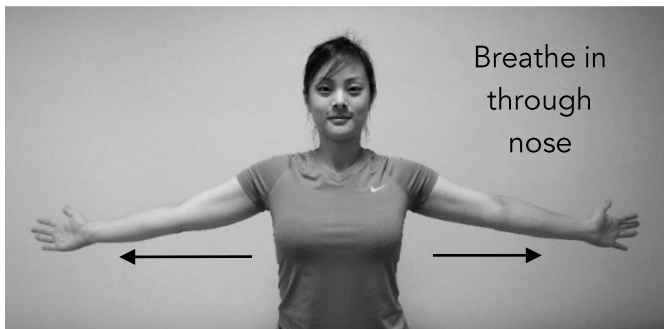
1. Start in a standing position
2. Clasp both hands behind your back
3. Move both hands backwards, squeezing your shoulder blades until a stretch is felt at the front of shoulder/chest area
4. Keep your body straight
5. Hold for ____ seconds relax both arms
6. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

Deep Breathing Exercise

1. Start with standing, put both hands in front of chest



2. Breathe in deeply through nose, while spreading arms outwards as shown



3. Breathe out slowly through mouth, while returning to starting position.



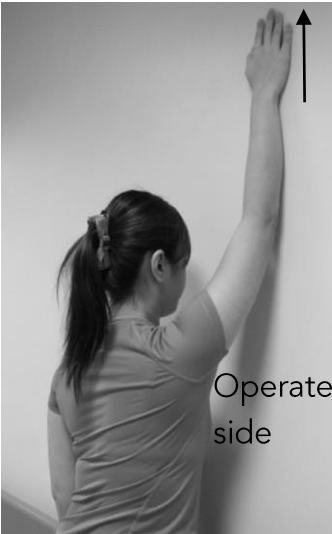
4. Repeat ___ times, ___ times per day.

Exercises From Day 15 Onwards After Surgery

Note:

You should only start these exercises after the removal of drains.

Wall Climb - Shoulder Flexion



1. Stand by facing the wall with the hand of your operated side on the wall
2. Move your hand up the wall as high as you can, until a stretch is felt at your shoulder
3. Hold for ____ seconds and lower hand
4. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

Wall Climb - Shoulder Abduction



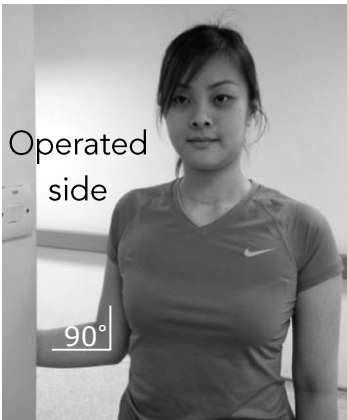
1. Stand with the arm of your operated side perpendicular to the wall, as shown
2. Move your hand up the wall as high as you can, until a stretch is felt at your shoulder
3. Hold for ____ seconds and lower hand
4. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

☐ Corner Stretch



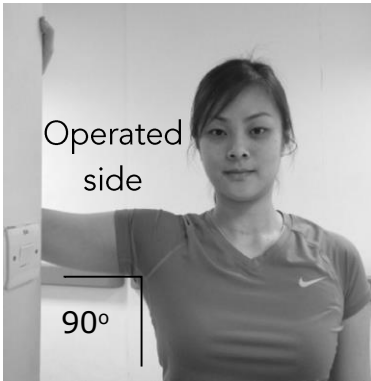
1. Place both forearms on a wall at a corner junction
2. Move your chest forwards until a comfortable stretch is felt across your chest
3. Relax your shoulder. **DO NOT** arch your back or step forwards.
4. Hold for ____ seconds.
5. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day.

☐ Shoulder Internal Rotation Stretch



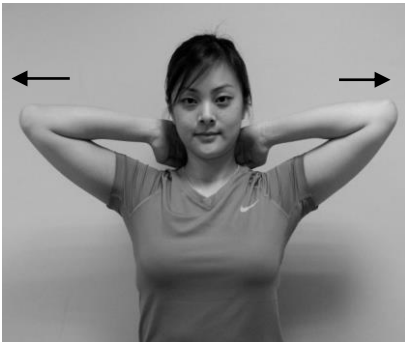
1. Stand alongside the door/wall, as shown
2. Keep your elbow close to your body at 90 degrees, as shown
3. Turn your body away until a stretch is felt along your chest area
4. Hold for ____ seconds. Relax and turn back to the starting position
5. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

Pectoralis Stretch (Standing)



1. Stand alongside a door/wall with the elbow of your operated side on the door/wall
2. Keep your shoulder at 90 / 120 degrees upward, as shown
3. Turn your body away until a stretch is felt along your chest and shoulder area
4. Hold for ____ seconds
5. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

Elbow Winging Exercise



1. Start in a sitting or standing position
2. Clasp both hands behind your neck, with your elbows facing forward
3. Open the elbows out to the side, until a stretch is felt along your chest and shoulders
4. Return to the original position
5. Repeat ____ times, ____ times per day

Deep Breathing Exercise

1. Start with standing, put both hands in front of chest



2. Breathe in deeply through nose, while spreading arms upwards as shown



3. Breathe out slowly through mouth, while returning to starting position.



4. Repeat ___ times, ___ times per day.

General Recommendations if You are at Risk of Developing Lymphedema.

Lymphoedema risk-reducing practices for the at-risk limb includes

1. Skin Care
2. Staying Active and Pacing of Activity
3. Avoiding Limb Constricting Activities
4. Therapeutic Compression Garments (If appropriate)
5. Avoiding Extremes of Temperature.

1. Skin Care

Proper skin care will help you avoid trauma/injury to the at-risk arm and reduce infection risk by

- ✓ Apply moisturiser daily to prevent chapping and chafing of skin
- ✓ Keep arm clean and dry
- ✓ Pay attention to your nail care; DO NOT cut cuticles
- ✓ Protect exposed skin with sunscreen and insect repellent
- ✓ Use razors with care to avoid nicks and skin irritations (shave underarm with electric razor)
- ✓ Wear gloves while doing activities that may cause skin injury
- ✓ If you have scratches/ punctures in your skin, wash with soap and water, apply antibiotics, and observe closely for signs of infection
- ✓ If you experienced rashes, itchiness, redness, pain, increased skin temperature and swelling, fever or flu-like symptoms, please contact your doctor immediately.

2. Staying Active and Pacing of Activity

- ✓ Gradually build up the duration and intensity of your activity or exercise
- ✓ Take frequent rest during your activity to allow for arm recovery
- ✓ Monitor your at-risk arm during and after activity for changes in size, shape, tissue, texture, soreness, firmness or feeling of heaviness in the limb.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity is known to be a major lymphedema risk factor.

3. Avoid Limb Constricting Activities

- ✓ If possible, never take your blood pressure on the arm at-risk
- ✓ Wear loose-fitting clothing and jewellery
- ✓ Avoid carrying a heavy bag/load at risk or swollen arm.

4. Therapeutic Compression Garments (If appropriate)

- ✓ Should be well-fitting
- ✓ Support the affected limb during strenuous activity
- ✓ If you have lymphoedema, wear a well fitting compression garment.

5. Avoiding of Extremes of Temperature

- ✓ Avoid exposure to extreme cold temperature which can be associated with rebound swelling or chapping of skin
- ✓ Avoid prolonged (>15 minutes) exposure to heat, particularly hot tubs and saunas.

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