

Exercises

This exercise program has been designed specifically for you after your breast surgery. The purpose is not to increase your strength but to prevent and/or reduce swelling, regain movement, strength and overall use of your arm.

Rules of Exercise

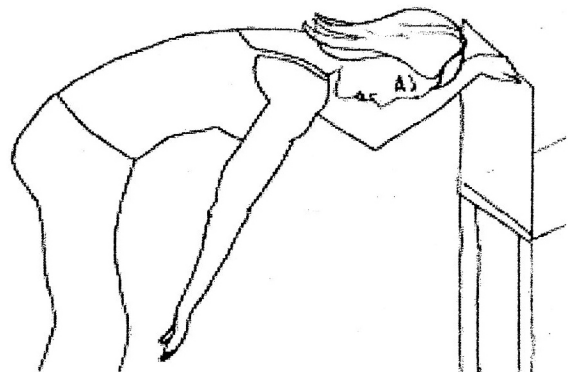
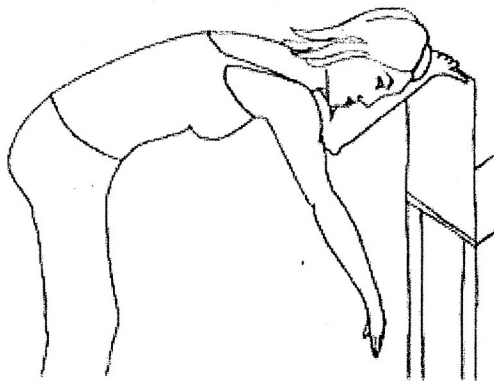
1. Stretch to the point of tension, NOT pain.
2. Do not jerk or bounce with stretching
3. Do not hold your breath
4. Start with repeating the exercise 3-5 times and increase as you feel like it
5. Do your exercises a couple times a day
6. When you start back doing your normal routine, you can stop the exercises

Created for Thomas Johns Cancer Center in 2001 by Emily Hawkins, OTR/L and Marti Scott, OTR/L

Exercises after Breast Surgery

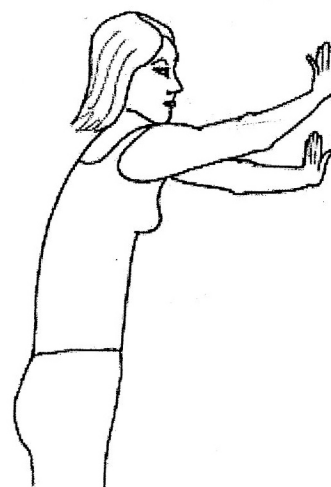
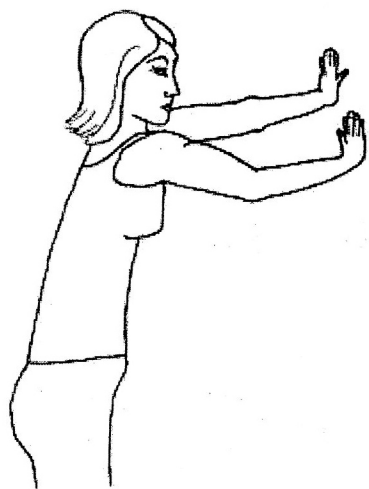
Following breast and armpit surgery it is important to regularly practice a few simple exercises to reduce the risk of shoulder stiffness, lymphedema, skin, muscle and underlying tissues thickness (fibrosis). Exercises should start as soon as feasible after surgery to alleviate post operative pain and promote a good recovery.

The monkey swing:



- Stand squarely and bend forward at the waist
- Circle entire arm clockwise, then anti-clockwise
- Swing forward and then backward
- Swing arm sideways away from body and back again
- Particularly good in the early weeks after surgery

Walk the wall:



Stand straight facing a wall

Stretch upright as much as comfortable

Place your hand on a wall so you are in the most comfortable position possible

Walk your hand up then down the wall. Repeat 10 times

The hair brush:

Sit with the head upright but relaxed and still

Brush the hair on the same side as the incision, then progress to whole of head

Shoulder shrugging:

Sit or stand squarely

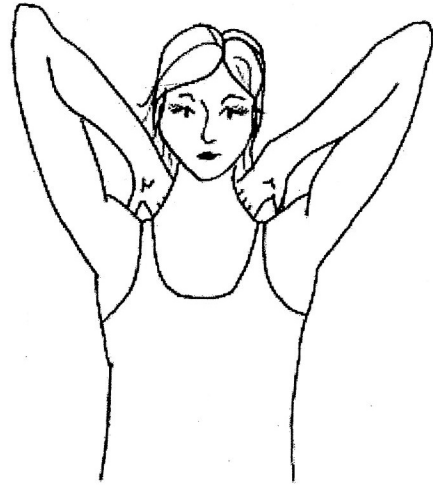
Bring shoulders up towards ear. Relax and repeat

Sink shoulders downwards. Relax and repeat

Ease shoulders forwards. Relax and repeat

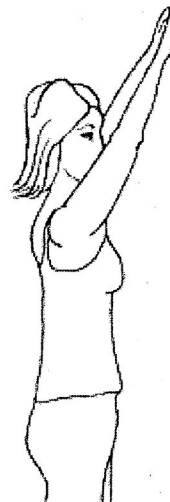
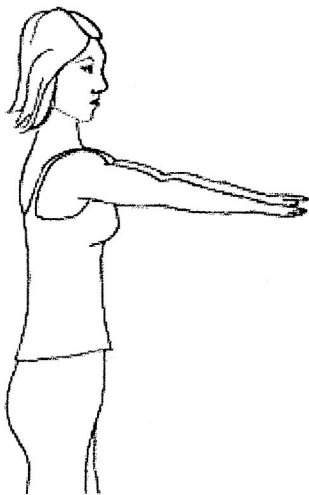
Pull shoulders back. Relax and repeat each movement 5-10 times

The praying mantis:



Place the hands on shoulders (or at the level of the shoulders)
Move the elbows forwards and upwards then down and inwards
Repeat each movement 10 times

The fan:



Put your hands out horizontally in front of you
Take them up above your head as far as you can
Drop them down to the waist

Big bird:



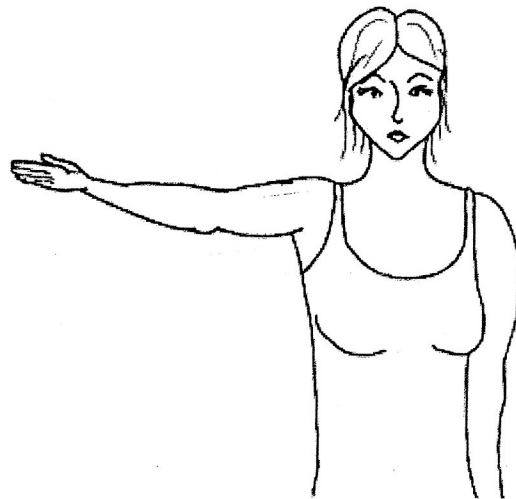
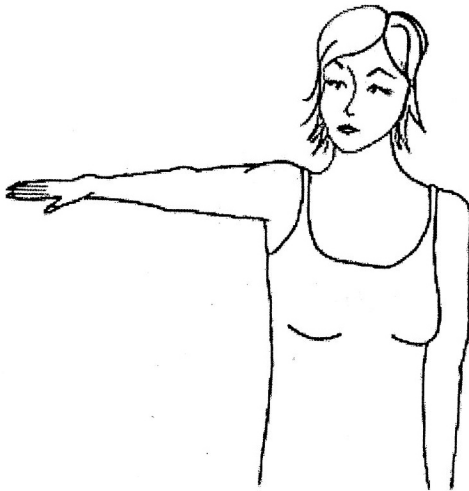
Starting with the arms straight out to the side of the body
Raise and lower your arms as high as you comfortably can
Repeat 10 times – should look like a small bird flapping its wings slowly

Small bird:



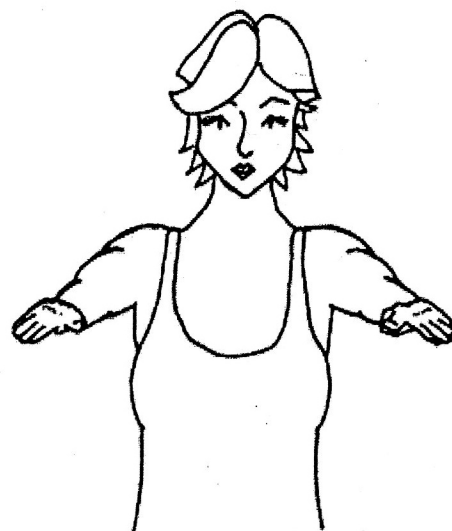
Place hands on shoulders
Move elbows sideways and upwards then back down
Should look like a small bird flapping its wings slowly
Repeat 10 times

Show me the money (side):



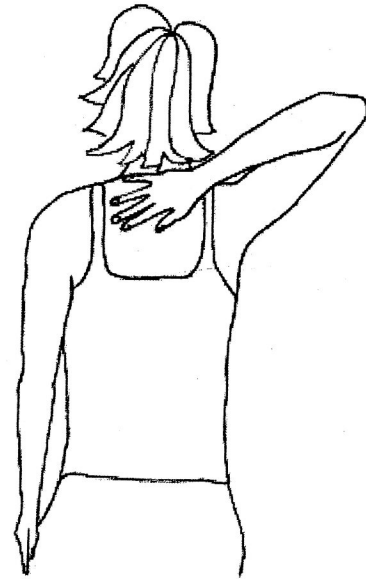
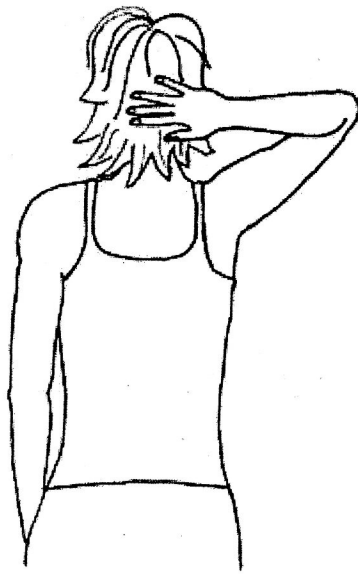
- Raise the arms straight out to the side of the body, from the shoulders
- Rotate the palms of the hand to face upwards then downwards
- Repeat 10 times – should look you're asking for money to be put in your hand

Show me the money (front):



- Raise the arms straight in front of the body, from the shoulders
- Rotate the palms of the hand to face upwards then downwards
- Should look you're asking for money to be put in your hand
- Repeat 10 times

Finger walking (neck):



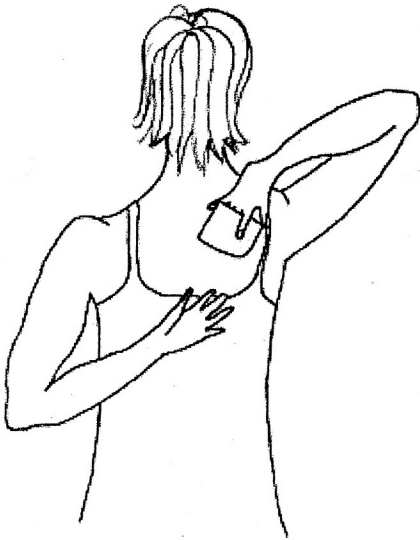
Stand straight with your head slightly bent forward
Taking your hand to the back of the neck
Walk fingers down spine as far as comfortable

Finger walking (back)



Stand straight looking forward
Lower hands to the base of your spine
Walk your fingers up the spine to bra level
Walk them back down and repeat 10 times
Back up to the head and repeat 10 times

The hand over:



- Put your right hand behind your back
- Practice passing a small, light object, e.g., purse, make up bag over your left shoulder to your other hand
- Repeat and swap hands
- Your ability to do this depends on your pre-operative range of movement

Once your incision has healed you may gently massage the skin on the breast, chest wall or surrounding tissues. Surgery and radiotherapy can both cause the underlying tissues to be less mobile and flexible. This a major cause of breast and chest wall pain. Local gentle massage can produced some excellent results and there is absolutely no evidence that the urban myth of “it could spread cancer cells around” has any truth. It is particularly good on the breast itself and the surrounding skin which may have stuck down onto the ribs. Put some extra virgin olive oil on the fingers and gently try to roll the skin over the ribs – be as firm as possible but do not cause any pain or bruising as this will be counter productive. At first you will not notice an improvement but with daily persistence the mobility will improve along with the pain.