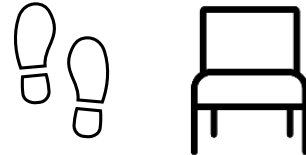


Physiotherapy after Breast Surgery

This handout will give you information about your recovery after surgery.

After your surgery (as soon as possible):

1. **Sit** in the chair
2. Go for a **walk** as you feel comfortable
3. Talk to your **nurse or physiotherapist** if you have any concerns about your movement or walking

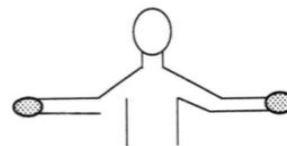


4. **Repeat 10 times every hour** you are awake

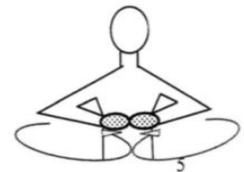
- a) Do **deep breathing** exercises
- b) Do **ankle movements** to improve circulation



Start here



Deep breath in



Slow breath out

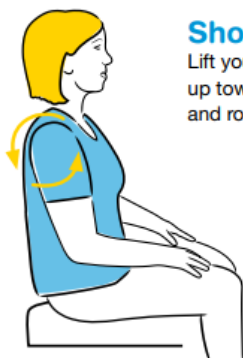
Arm exercises

Level 1 (Cancer Council Australia, 2018)

Start these on the **day of your surgery** to improve shoulder movement

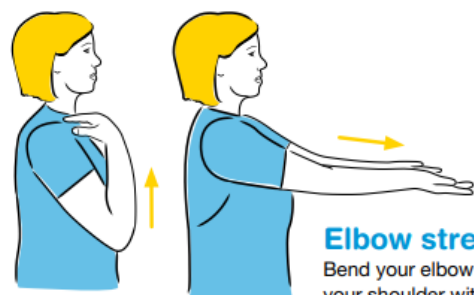
Gradually build up to doing each exercise 10 times 4 times a day

A



Shoulder rolls
Lift your shoulder slowly up towards your ears and roll backwards.

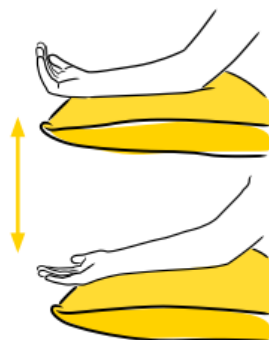
B



Elbow stretch
Bend your elbow and touch your shoulder with your hand. Then straighten your elbow completely.

C

Wrist exercise
Support your elbow on a pillow. Keep your hand relaxed and your arm by your side, then bend your wrist back and forth.



D

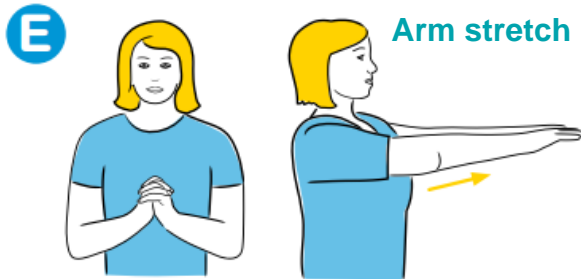
Hand squeeze
Make a fist and squeeze slowly, and then gently open fingers out and relax.



Level 2 (Cancer Council Australia, 2018)

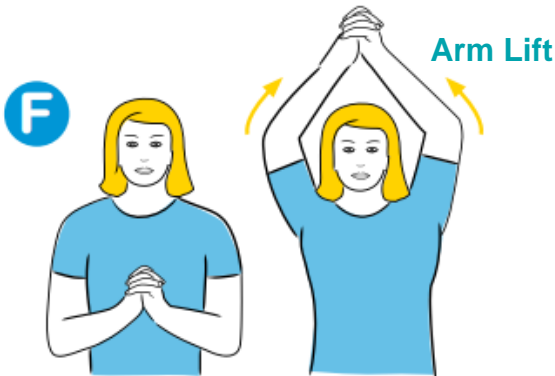
If you have a **drain**, and it has been **removed**, **start the level 2 exercises**.
Remember to **keep doing the level 1 exercises** too.

Gradually
build up to doing
each exercise
10 times
4 times a day



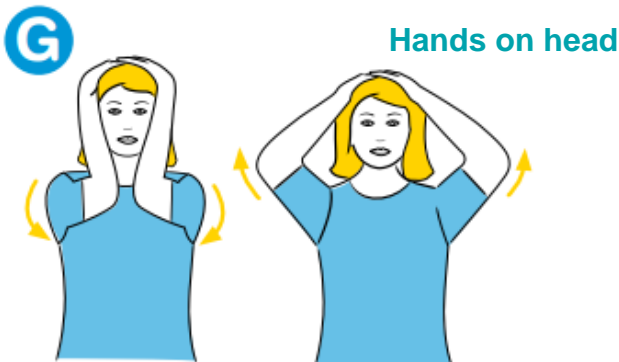
Arm stretch

- Clasp your hands together with your elbows in
- Use both arms to help
- Stretch out both arms until elbows are straight
- Once you are at shoulder height, return your hands to your chest



Arm Lift

- Clasp your hands together with your elbows in
- Use both arms to help
- Lift your arms over your head
- Reach your arms as high as you are comfortable to go
- Then lower your hands back to your chest
- It is easier starting this exercise lying down



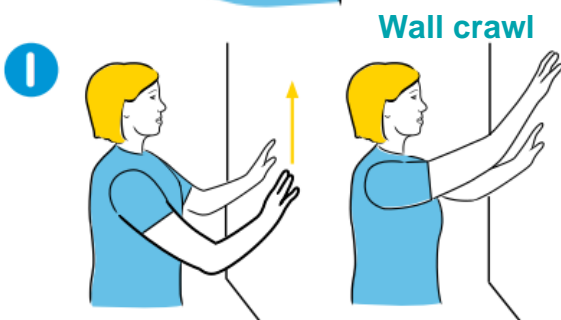
Hands on head

- Clasp your hands together and place on top of your head
- Slowly and gently bring your elbows together
- Then stretch your elbows backwards and hold for 5-10 seconds
- It is easier starting this exercise lying down
- Keep your head and neck nice and straight



Hands behind neck

- Clasp your hands together and place behind your neck
- Slowly and gently stretch your elbows backwards and hold for 5-10 seconds
- You should feel a stretch across your chest
- Keep your head and neck nice and straight
- This exercise will help stretch scar tissue
- It is easier starting this exercise lying down

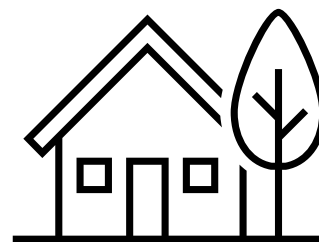


Wall crawl

- Stand facing the wall with your feet 20-25cm away from the wall
- Start with both hands on the wall around elbow height
- Crawl your fingers up the wall going as far up as you can
- Slowly slide your hands back down

When you are home

- **Gradually** return to your **usual activities**
- **Continue** your level 1 and 2 exercises to **improve shoulder movement** (may take **several weeks** after surgery)
- **Continue** these exercises even through additional **chemotherapy** and/or **radiation therapy**
- **Moisturise** your **arm** and **chest** regularly but do not moisturise over your scar or surgical area until advised by your doctor, nurse or physiotherapists at breast clinic
- **Increase** your general **physical activity** and **exercise as you can**
- Start **strengthening** exercises once you are close to having full shoulder movement
- It's best to start with **light weights** (500g - 1kg) and **increase weight gradually** as you can. Ask your physiotherapist if you have any questions.



Follow-up appointments

- You will attend the **post-operative breast clinic** at 1-2 weeks after your surgery at RBWH
- You will see a **physiotherapist** at this appointment
- They will check your **shoulder movement** and **make a follow up plan** with you
- If you have lymph nodes removed, you may also be referred to our **Lymphoedema Surveillance Service (SAIL)** at RBWH or Redcliffe Hospital
- You will be contacted by **letter or phone call** if you need this appointment



Please don't hesitate to contact us if:

- Your **shoulder movement is not improving**, or you are experiencing **increased shoulder pain**
- You notice a **string or cord-like pulling sensation** along the inside of your upper arm which restricts your arm movement
- You notice any **swelling in your arm, hand, chest wall or breast**

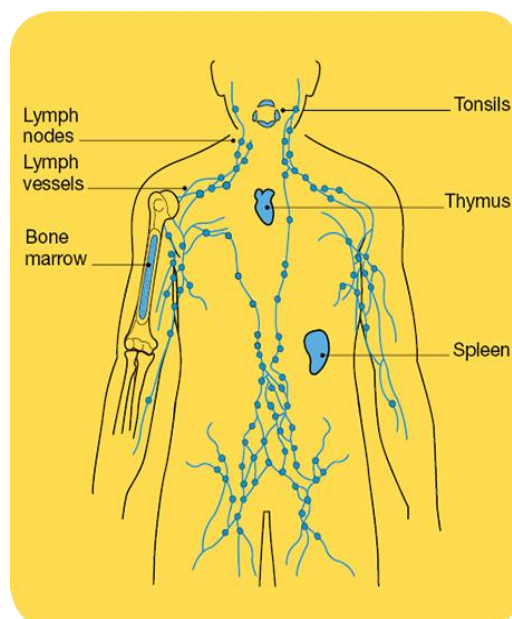
To access this resource online, please scan the QR code, which will take you to our website.



Lymphoedema (Cancer Council Australia, 2018)

What is lymphoedema?

- The **lymphatic system** is part of the immune system and helps to protect the body from disease, get rid of waste and drain fluid
- When the lymphatic system is not working properly, **fluid can build up** causing swelling
- **Persistent swelling** is called lymphoedema
- Breast cancer-related lymphoedema may occur following **surgery, chemotherapy or radiation therapy**
- Each person's risk of developing lymphoedema is different, depending on the **number of lymph nodes** removed and **types of treatment**



What does lymphoedema look like?

- Feelings of **tightness, heaviness or fullness** in the operated arm, hand, chest wall or breast (even if this goes down at night)
- **Heavy feeling** or **ache** in the arm, hand, chest wall or breast
- Swelling that comes and goes, or you notice it more at the end of the day
- **Tighter** clothing, shoes or jewellery
- Not being able to fully move the affected arm
- **Pitting** of the skin (when pressure leaves an indent in the skin)

Reducing lymphoedema risk

- **Exercise** and move regularly - start slowly and increase gradually
- **Move** normally - this will keep the fluid flowing
- **Look after your skin** - keep it clean, moisturised and protected from cuts and burns
- Maintain a **healthy weight** - ask our staff if you need support
- Seek urgent **medical help** if you notice redness, heat, pain or think you have an infection
- **Where possible**, use the other arm for blood tests, vaccinations, or blood pressure monitoring (does not apply in emergencies)

If you have specific questions, please discuss these with your doctor, breast care nurse or physiotherapist.

Contact details:

RBWH Physiotherapy Department: Level 2 Ned Hanlon Building
Telephone: (07) 3646 4319