

# Exercises After Breast Surgery

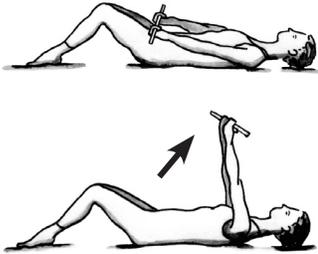
No matter what type of breast cancer surgery you have, it's important to do exercises afterward to get your arm and shoulder moving again. Exercises help to decrease side effects of your surgery and help you get back to your usual activities.

It's important to exercise, but it's also important to be safe. Talk with your doctor about the right kind of exercises for your condition. The exercises described here can be done as soon as your doctor says it's OK – usually a week or more after surgery.

## Exercises to do while lying down

Do these exercises on a bed or the floor. Lie on your back with your knees and hips bent and your feet flat.

Figure 1

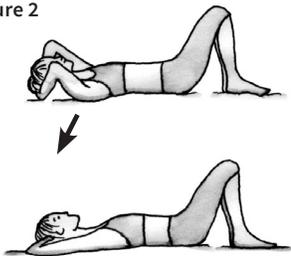


### Wand exercise (Figure 1)

This exercise helps increase the forward motion of your shoulders. You'll need a broom handle, yardstick, or other stick-like object to use as the wand in this exercise.

- Hold the wand across your belly in both hands with your palms facing up.
- Lift the wand up over your head as far as you can. Use your unaffected arm to help lift the wand until you feel a stretch in your affected arm.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Lower arms and repeat 5 to 7 times.

Figure 2



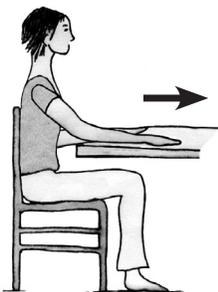
### Elbow winging (Figure 2)

This exercise helps increase the movement in the front of your chest and shoulder. It may take many weeks of regular exercise before your elbows will get close to the bed or floor.

- Clasp your hands behind your head with your elbows pointing toward the ceiling.
- Move your elbows apart and down toward the bed or floor.
- Repeat 5 to 7 times.

## Exercises to do while sitting up

Figure 3

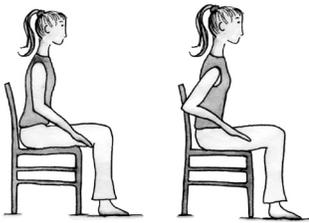


### Shoulder blade stretch (Figure 3)

This exercise helps increase your shoulder blade movement.

- Sit in a chair very close to a table with your back against the back of the chair.
- Place the unaffected arm on the table with your elbow bent and palm down. Do not move this arm during the exercise.
- Place the affected arm on the table, palm down, with your elbow straight.
- Without moving your trunk, slide the affected arm forward, toward the opposite side of the table. You should feel your shoulder blade move as you do this.
- Relax your arm and repeat 5 to 7 times.

Figure 4

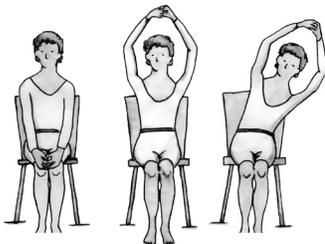


### Shoulder blade squeeze (Figure 4)

This exercise also helps increase shoulder blade movement.

- Facing straight ahead, sit in a chair in front of a mirror. Do not rest against the back of the chair.
- Your arms should be at your sides with your elbows bent.
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together, bringing your elbows behind you. Keep your shoulders level as you do this. Do not lift your shoulders up toward your ears.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 5 to 7 times.

Figure 5



### Side bending (Figure 5)

This exercise helps increase movement of your trunk and body.

- Sit in a chair and clasp your hands together in front of you. Lift your arms slowly over your head, straightening your arms.
- When your arms are over your head, bend your trunk to the right. Bend at your waist and keep your arms overhead.
- Return to the starting position and bend to the left.
- Repeat 5 to 7 times.

## Exercises to do while standing

Figure 6

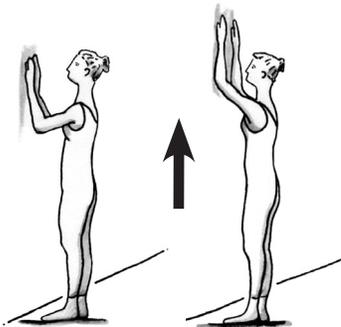


### Chest wall stretch (Figure 6)

This exercise helps stretch your chest.

- Stand facing a corner with your toes about 8 to 10 inches from the corner.
- 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.
- Keep your arms and feet in place and move your chest toward the corner. You will feel a stretch across your chest and shoulders.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 5 to 7 times.
- The picture shows stretching both sides at the same time, but you may find it more comfortable to stretch one arm at a time.
- Be sure you keep your shoulders dropped far away from your ears as you do this stretch.

Figure 7



### Shoulder stretch (Figure 7)

This exercise helps increase the mobility in your shoulder.

- Stand facing the wall with your toes about 8 to 10 inches from the wall.
- Put your hands on the wall. Use your fingers to “climb the wall,” reaching as high as you can until you feel a stretch.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 5 to 7 times.
- The picture shows both arms going up at the same time, but you may find it easier to raise one arm at a time.
- Be sure you keep your shoulders dropped far away from your ears as you raise your arms.



For cancer information, day-to-day help, and emotional support, call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

This information was developed with assistance from the Oncology Section of the American Physical Therapy Association.