

Shoulder and Arm Exercises After Breast Surgery

After breast surgery, using your arm as normally as possible can help you get better faster.

And when you're ready ...

doing a few simple exercises can reduce stiffness and soreness and get your arm and shoulder back to normal.

These exercises can also help prevent any complications from the surgery, like extra swelling ... called lymphedema ... or scar tissue.

You may already be doing some shoulder shrugs and rolls, but the exercises in this video are for when you and your doctor feel it's okay to start reaching your arms overhead.

These four exercises are just some of the possible ones you could do.

Each of these exercises ... can be done sitting or standing.

And you don't have to do them all at one time.

A good goal is to try to do each set of exercises two times a day, until you can move your arm more normally.

As you do them, you may feel a deep stretch and some discomfort, but you shouldn't feel pain.

If you start with a few deep breaths ...

and try to focus on your breathing while doing the exercises ...

it may help you ... and your muscles ... stay more relaxed.

The first exercise is called the shoulder blade stretch.

Put your arms down by your sides with your palms facing forward.

Raise your arms and bring your hands together above your head ...

and hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

The second one is called the shoulder pinch.

Start with your arms by your sides.

Bring your elbows back and squeeze your shoulder blades together.

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Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds, trying to keep your shoulders back and down. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

The next exercise is elbow circles.

Put your right hand on your right shoulder ...

and your left hand on your left shoulder.

Raise your elbows until you feel a stretch, and make circles with your elbows.

Start small and then make your circles bigger.

After a few rounds, change the direction of your circles. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

The last one is the overhead reach.

Clasp your hands together in front of you and straighten your elbows.

Then lift your arms up toward your head and hold them there for 15 to 30 seconds.

And again ... repeat this exercise 2 to 4 times.

During this exercise, you may want to use your non-surgery arm to help the arm on the affected side.

So ... now you know more about exercises to help get your arm and shoulder movement back to normal.

You may do them on your own, or you may find that physical therapy is helpful.

And if you have any questions or concerns about your exercises ...

or your recovery ... like when it's okay to lift something ...

be sure to talk with your care provider.