

Information for patients
**Exercise and advice
after breast cancer
surgery**

Physiotherapy
Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust
Stott Lane, Salford, M6 8HD
Telephone: 0161 206 5328

Role of the physiotherapist

Our role is to offer support and advice regarding posture, care and function of the arm and shoulder to help you achieve maximum use of your arm after your operation.

You will be by a physiotherapist who will explain the exercises which are designed to help you regain mobility in your shoulder and arm. This will also be an opportunity to ask any questions and discuss any worries you may have.

Before you exercise

- Correct your posture in front of the mirror.
- Sit or stand up straight making sure your shoulders are level and relaxed.
- Draw your shoulder blades down towards your waist.

Exercises

- All the exercises given should be done within the limits of your pain.
- Do the exercises slowly and gently.
- The exercises for when drains in place should be repeated five times and done twice a day. These should be continued and used as a warm up when the drains are removed and you progress to the next set of exercises.

If you have any concerns or worries please contact.

Karen McClean
0161 206 5328

Exercises for the first week following surgery

These exercises should be repeated **five times twice a day**.

Sit or stand up straight to do the exercises.

Exercise 1

Roll your shoulders up, back and down.

Release and repeat.



Exercise 2

Support your affected arm in the other hand - lift your elbows forward and up until they are level with your shoulders.

Release and repeat.



Exercise 3

Place your hands on your shoulders and raise your elbows out to the side until it is at shoulder height.

Release and repeat.



Exercise 4

Place your hands loosely on your shoulders and raise your elbows forward until it is at shoulder height.

Release and repeat.



Exercises after the first week

Do these three times a day. Start with **five** repetitions of each exercise and increase to **ten** times. You should feel a pull but no pain at the limit of each exercise.

If you are struggling to do the exercises they can be done lying down.

Do each exercise until full shoulder movement has returned. This may take up to six weeks.

Arm stiffness and tightness can continue long after surgery and radiotherapy; so it is a good idea to continue with the exercises as part of your daily routine.

Exercise 1

Keeping both arms straight, then lift your arms forward and up as far as possible toward your ears - this can also be done lying down.

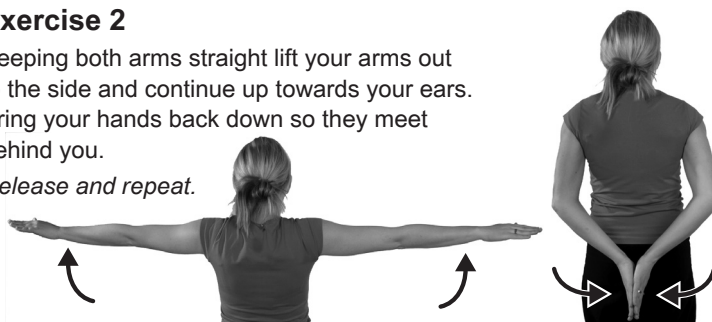
Release and repeat.



Exercise 2

Keeping both arms straight lift your arms out to the side and continue up towards your ears. Bring your hands back down so they meet behind you.

Release and repeat.



Exercise 3

Clasp your hands behind your neck and, keeping your head upright, gently push your elbows back and stretch your elbows out to the side - this can also be done lying down.

Release and repeat.



Exercise 4

Place your affected arm behind your back and reach up as far as possible

Release and repeat.



Exercise 5

Stand close to and facing a wall with your feet apart. Start with your hand at shoulder height and "walk" your fingers up the wall as far as you can. Hold for a count of 10 and walk your hand back down. You can mark the level to see how you are progressing.

This can also be done standing sideways to the wall.

Release and repeat.



If at any time you have any problems with the movement of your arm or persistent pain contact Specialist Physiotherapist Karen McClean on: 0161 206 5328

Going home after breast surgery

- **Do Not** drive for two weeks following surgery to allow the wound to heal. Only drive when you are sure you can react to an emergency situation and always check with your insurance company first.
- **Do Not** do any heavy lifting, pulling and pushing for six weeks but try and use your arm normally. Activities such as hanging out washing and vacuuming may need to be introduced gradually.
- If you have any questions regarding returning to sport or hobbies ask for advice from your Physiotherapist.

Complications

- **Swelling:** You may notice this in or around your armpit a few days after the drainage tube has been removed. This is a collection of fluid called a seroma. Should this occur contact your Consultant for further advice.
- **Tight Bands or Cords:** These can develop beginning in the armpit and stretching down the upper arm and occasionally into the forearm. They cause a strong pulling sensation when reaching with the arm. If this occurs contact Specialist Physiotherapist Karen McClean on **0161 206 5328**
- **Altered sensation:** You may notice numbness, tingling or extra sensitivity to light touch over your breast or upper and inner arm. These unusual sensations are very common and will usually go away over time.

- **Stiff Shoulder:** If your shoulder becomes stiff or painful then please ring or ask the team for a referral to physiotherapy.

Care of your hand and arm after breast surgery

A small number of women may develop a swelling of the arm called lymphoedema. It is more likely to occur if you have had your lymph nodes removed or following a course of radiotherapy. To reduce this risk you should take extra care of your affected arm(s) for the rest of your life.

- **Do not** have blood pressure taken on the affected side.
- **Do not** have injections or blood samples taken from your affected arm (including pin pricks, drips and vaccinations).
- **Do not** use a razor blade or wax your underarms. Use a hair removal cream or electric razor instead.
- **Avoid** cuts and scratches on your arm or hand. If they occur wash it thoroughly and apply an antiseptic cream immediately.
- **Avoid** burning your arm - Always wear oven gloves when using an oven.
- **Avoid** sunburn - Always wear a high factor sunscreen.
- **Avoid** insect bites - Use an insect repellent.
- **Avoid** heavy lifting and repetitive continuous or strenuous activities

Exercise and advice after breast cancer surgery

- **Do** wear long sleeves and gloves in the garden.
- **Do** wear rubber gloves when doing dirty or rough work.
- **Do** use a moisturising cream on your arm to prevent the skin becoming dry or cracked.
- **Do** take care when cutting your fingernails and do not cut your cuticles, use a cream.
- **Do** contact your GP as soon as possible if your arm does become red, hot or swollen, or if a cut looks as if it might be infected.

For further information on this leaflet, it's references and sources used, please contact **0161 206 5328**

Copies of this information are available in other languages and formats upon request. In accordance with the Equality Act we will make 'reasonable adjustments' to enable individuals with disabilities, to access this treatment / service.

If you need this interpreting please telephone

Polish

Jeżeli potrzebne jest Państwu to tłumaczenie, proszę zadzwonić pod numer.

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس ترجمانی کی ضرورت ہے تو مہربانی کر کے فون کریں۔

Arabic

إذا كنتم بحاجة الى تفسير او ترجمة هذا الرجاء الاتصال

Chinese

如果需要翻译，请拨打电话

Farsi

اگر به ترجمه این نیاز دارید ، لطفاً تلفن کنید

0161 206 0224

Under the Human Tissue Act 2004, consent will not be required from living patients from whom tissue has been taken for diagnosis or testing to use any left over tissue for the following purposes: clinical audit, education or training relating to human health, performance assessment, public health monitoring and quality assurance.

If you object to your tissue being used for any of the above purposes, please inform a member of staff immediately.

Salford Royal operates a smoke-free policy.

For advice on stopping smoking contact the Health and Wellbeing Service on 0161 206 4429

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