

Post-TRAM Flap Reconstruction: Exercises

Physiotherapy is an important part of your care following your breast reconstruction surgery. There are special exercises that you can do at home to help you recover. The following information has been developed by the Physiotherapy Department to explain the exercise program following your surgery.

These exercises can help to prevent or reduce:

- pain which occurs after surgery
- swelling of the arm (lymphedema)
- shoulder stiffness and the discomfort this may cause
- arm weakness

The overall goal is to help you resume your daily activities and keep your muscles flexible.

THE EXERCISE PROGRAM

The following exercises can be started after your drain is removed. These exercises should be done for two months after your surgery and continued until you regain full range of movement of your shoulders, neck and chest. This can take as long as 6 months.

The exercise program should be followed regardless of when you had mastectomy surgery.

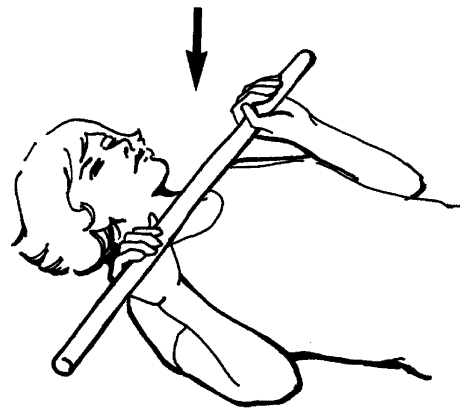
Do the exercises slowly. It is normal to feel some tightness and discomfort while doing the exercises. To lessen this discomfort and relax the muscles, blow out as you hold the stretched position. Try listening to yourself as you do this. Do not push if you have any pain.

It is important that you do the exercises at least twice a day. By following this program as instructed, you will have less pain and fear of moving each time you do the exercises.

Exercises for the first 3 weeks

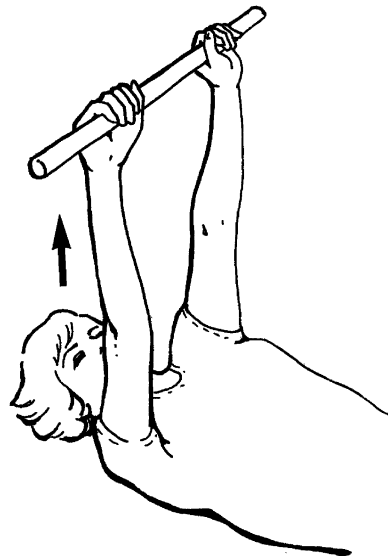
Shoulder Mobility

1. Position: Lie on your back with your hands interlocked or holding a stick such as a rolling pin or broom in your hands. Keep your knees bent.



Practice:

- Do push ups into the air.
- Start with your hands at your shoulders.
- Reach up to the ceiling, until you can feel a relaxed stretch at your shoulders.
- Hold for 7 relaxed breaths.
- Repeat 4 times.



2. **Position:** Sitting position.

Practice:

- Swing arm in a “clockwise” circle.
Then swing arm in a “counter clockwise” circle.
- Repeat 10 times.

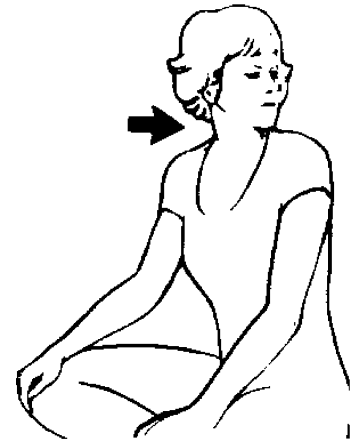


Neck Mobility

1. **Position:** Sit or stand.

Practice:

- Turn your head to the limits of comfort.
- Hold this position for seven seconds.
- Repeat 4 times to each side.



2. **Position:** Sit or stand.

Tilt your head away from the shoulder that you are going to stretch.

Practice #1

- Shrug your shoulder up toward your ear. (see white arrows).
- Hold for 7 seconds

Practice #2

- Reach your hand toward the floor (See black arrows)
- Hold for 7 seconds.



REPEAT THIS SEQUENCE 4 TIMES TO EACH SIDE.

Posture Correction

1. Position:

Lie, sit or stand with rubber tubing or soft belt around your wrists.

Practice:

- Move your wrists apart, keeping your elbows into your side and shoulders down.
- Hold 7 seconds. Repeat 4 times.

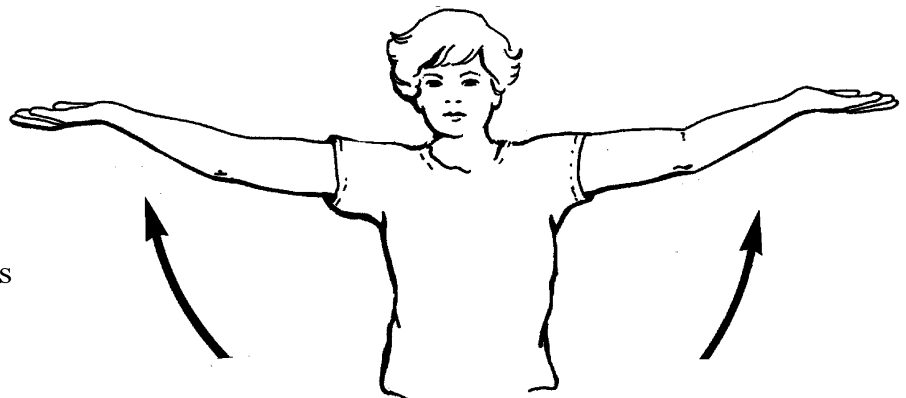
Note: This is a good exercise to do before or after housework, when using a computer or driving a car. It will relax the tension in your neck and shoulders.



Shoulder Strengthening

1. Position:

Sit on a high back chair or stand against a wall with arms relaxed by your side.



Practice:

- Raise your arms up and out to the level of your shoulders i.e., 90 degrees.
- Your palms should be facing up towards the ceiling.
- Hold for 7 seconds. Repeat 4 times.

When doing this exercise:

- Press your shoulder blades against the chair or wall while you move your arms up slowly. Your arms should feel light.
- Try to do this in front of a mirror.

NOTE: Your arm should not go past the 90 degree level in the first 3 weeks following surgery.

EXERCISES FOR THE NEXT THREE WEEKS

Shoulder Mobility

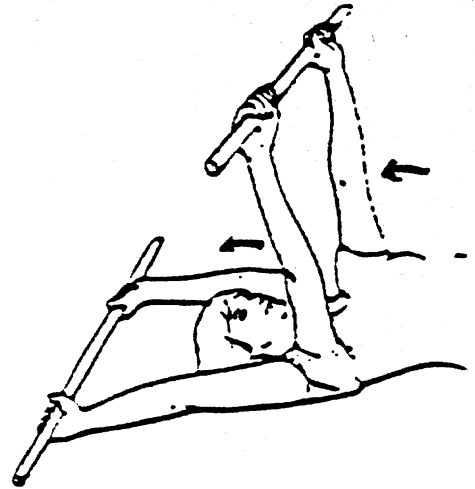
1. Position:

- Lie on your back with your hands interlocked or holding a stick, such as a rolling pin or broom, in your hands.
- Keep your knees bent.

Practice:

- Bring your arms slowly above your head while reaching for the ceiling. Go as high as is comfortable and gradually increase.
- Hold for 7 relaxed breaths.
- Lower arms down to your thighs.
- Repeat 4 times.

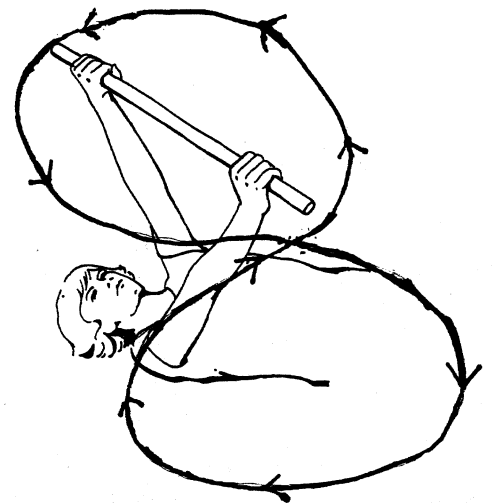
NOTE: Gradually increase the level until you can reach right above your head. (see diagram)



2. Position: Same as above

Practice:

- Holding your arms straight bring your right hand down to your right hip. Then bring your arms straight out from your body and swing them above your right shoulder.
- Do this in a smooth movement.
- Then move your arms down to your left hip and up above your left shoulder. This makes a figure of eight motion.
- Repeat this sequence 4 times on each side.



It is important to keep your elbows straight during this exercise to make the correct figure-of-eight movements.

3. Position:

Lie on your back on a flat surface OR stand with your back to the wall. Put your hands behind your head.



Practice:

- Move your elbows apart to touch the bed or wall. When you feel a stretch hold this position for 7 relaxed breaths.
- Repeat this sequence 4 times.

Shoulder Strengthening

1. Position:

Sit on a high backed chair or stand against a wall with arms relaxed by your side.



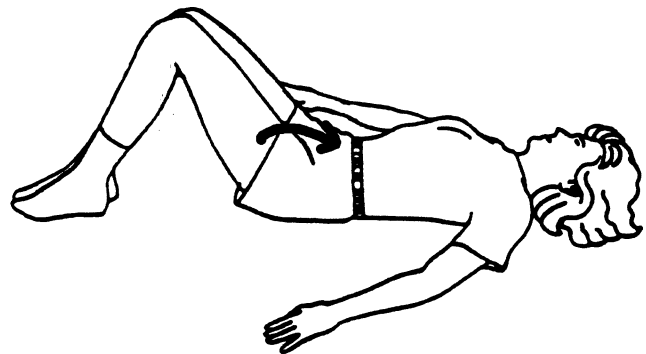
Practice:

- Raise your arms up and out to the side and over your head without shrugging your shoulders.
- Your palms should be facing upwards towards the ceiling.
- Repeat 4 times.

Abdominal Strengthening at Six Weeks

1. Position:

Lie on your back. Keep your knees bent and feet flat. Keep your pelvis flat on the floor and do not move it during the exercise.



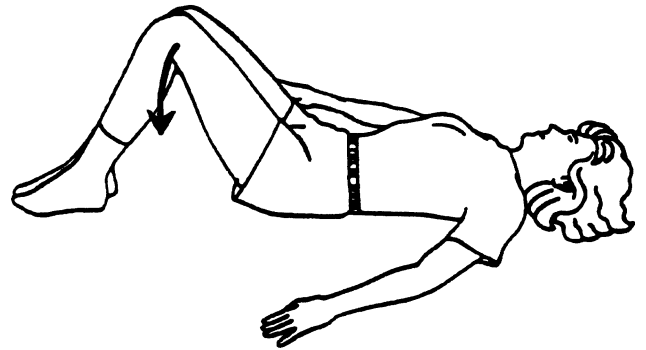
Practice:

- Pull your tummy up towards your spine and under your rib cage.
- Hold for 7 seconds.
- Repeat 4 times.

2. **Position:** Same as above.

Practice:

- Tuck tummy up and back towards spine.
- Hold this position while letting one knee fall out to side.
- Repeat 4 times with each leg.

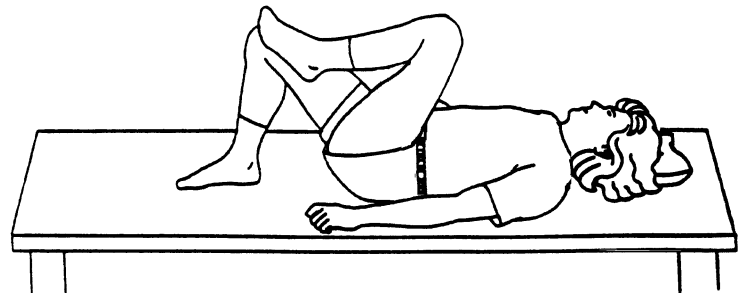


3. **Position:** Same as above

Practice:

Pull tummy up and back towards spine. Bend hip and bring knee towards chest.

Repeat 4 times with each leg.

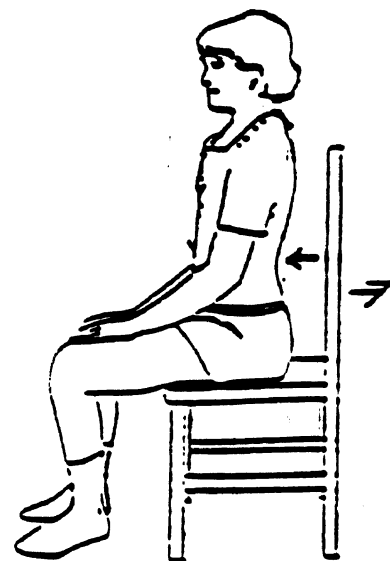


NOTE: Remind yourself throughout the day (every hour) to tuck tummy up and back towards the spine.

4. **Position:** lying or sitting (pelvic rocking)

Practice:

- Flatten low back against chair.
- Hold for 7 seconds.
- Then arch lower back away from chair.
- Hold 7 seconds.
- This is called a “pelvic rock” exercise.
- Hold each position for 7 seconds.



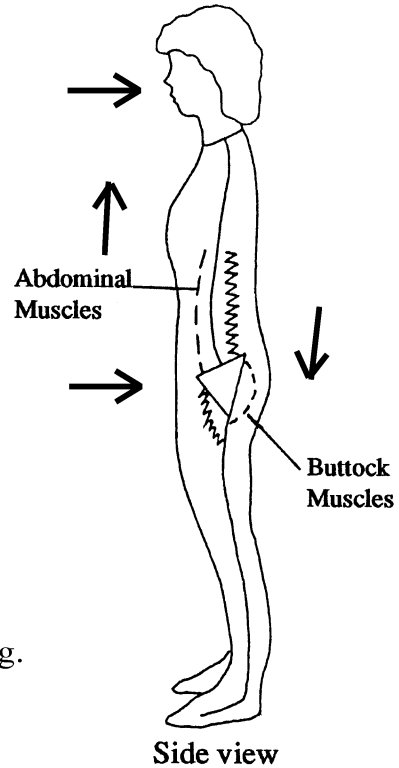
GOOD POSTURE

It is important to regain good normal posture.

To find your correct posture do the following:

- Stand and separate your feet slightly apart.
- Put your body weight evenly over both feet.
- Pull your abdominal muscles (tummy) in
- Tighten up your buttock muscles
- Lift up your rib cage and tuck your chin in

Practice walking in this position with your arms swinging.



Your next appointment will be on _____

If you have any problems before then please call:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

This information is of a general nature and may vary according to your special circumstances. If you have specific questions, please contact your physician or appropriate health care professional.



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