**Physiotherapy Advice post Mastectomy, Wide Local Excision and Axillary Node clearance.**

**Introduction**

The information in this leaflet applies to patients after mastectomy, wide local excision and axillary node clearance.

Your consultant has asked that you have physiotherapy to get your arm and shoulder moving again to prevent shoulder stiffness after your surgery.

Following certain types of breast surgery, you may be at risk of developing swelling in the affected arm. The exercises in this booklet will help to prevent this.

They will also help you regain use of your arm (as quickly as possible after the surgery).

You should do your exercises every day for the first 6-8 weeks after your surgery. You will also be reviewed by the hospital physiotherapist on your first review date with the doctor. This usually takes place about two weeks post discharge from the hospital.

If you develop any unexplained symptoms such as increasing pain, arm swelling or problems with wound healing please contact your physiotherapist or breast care nurse.

**Some Do’s and Don’ts**
**Do** start using the arm on the affected side for light tasks (brushing your hair, using your mobile phone) the day after surgery.

**Do** take adequate painkillers (as prescribed for you) to help you do your exercises properly.

**Do** let pain be your guide – it is normal to feel a gentle stretch when you exercise but you should not feel pain.

**Do** stand tall and try to keep your back straight. Good posture is very important after breast surgery to recover full arm function.

**Do** your exercises daily as advised by your physiotherapist.

**Don’t** use the arm on the affected side for heavy tasks such as hovering, hanging out washing or window cleaning for the first 6 weeks after your surgery.

**Don’t** drive until your consultant until your consultant says you can. You should also check with your insurance company.

### Day 1 exercises

The following exercises are helpful for immediate post operative swelling. You should do them as often as possible. When resting keep the arm on the operated side supported and try not to let it hang down by your side.

1. Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth.

2. Open and close your fingers as if making a fist.

3. Move your wrist up and down as if waving.

4. Bend your elbow and straighten it out fully.
The following exercises are important to prevent stiffness in your shoulder and should be done **5-10 times each, 3 times a day.**

5. Shrug your shoulders

![Drawing of a person shrugging shoulders](image)

6. Press your shoulder blades back together. Turn your head from side to side.
7. Join your hands and keep your elbows straight. Lift your arms up to eye level. This exercise can be done either sitting or lying. If you have had an axillary node clearance do not stretch your arms over eye level for the first 7 days post surgery.

**Day 2**

Continue with previous exercises and add the following-;

8. Brush your hair with the affected arm.
9. Sitting up in a chair or lying on your back, with your hands behind your neck and your elbows pointing forward. Move your elbows apart back to the chair or bed. You will need to achieve good flexibility in this exercise in particular if you will require radiotherapy treatment.

Once the drains have been removed you can include the following exercises

10. Stand facing a wall. Walk your fingers up the wall as high as possible, reverse down in the same way.
11. Stand with your non affected arm against the wall. Raise your arm up sideways toward your head with the thumb leading the way (like the arm of a clock).
Please note these are general guidelines and instructions may change for your specific condition.

If you have any further questions, contact your physiotherapist or speak to your doctor at your next clinic appointment.

REFERENCES:

