After Breast Surgery Recovery

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Description
This patient education handout shares information on post breast surgery exercises.

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Disciplines
Occupational Therapy | Rehabilitation and Therapy

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After breast surgery: actions to keep you moving

- You can do these activities with your chest expanders in place!
- These actions help you to:
  - keep your arm swelling down
  - help your shoulders and arms move
  - help you continue to do the things you need to do

Find times in your day that work best for you to do these activities.

If you feel a lot of pain or discomfort during these actions, stop and call your doctor.

Arm lift:

To decrease arm swelling, lie down and raise your arm above your heart.

Put pillows under your arms so that your hands are higher than your wrists and your elbows are higher than your shoulders.
- Do this for 45 minutes, 2-3 times a day.

Do this:
- in the morning after you wake up
- before you go to bed
- during the day when you need a break

Tip: You could sit on the sofa and watch TV while doing this.

Pursed lip breathing:

Relax your neck and shoulders.

1. Keep your mouth closed, **breathe in** slowly through your nose for two seconds, like you are smelling flowers.
2. Next, make a small “o” shape with your mouth and **breathe out** for four seconds. Keep a steady and slow breath, like you are blowing out birthday candles. Do not breathe out hard.
Hand exercises:
These help stop swelling in your arms.
- Rest your elbow on a flat surface, like a table. Keep your wrist straight.
- Touch each finger to your thumb, one at a time. Do this 5 times.
- Roll up a washcloth or small towel. Squeeze it as tight as you can and then let go. Do this 5 times.

Do these movements after every meal while you are sitting at the table.

Shoulder wings:
1. Make your hands into fists. Press them together in front of your chest.
2. Keep your fists together, bring your elbows out to each side. Do these 10 times.

Do these after you wake up in the morning, after lunch, and before you go to bed.

Shoulder rolls:
Sit or stand with your arms at your sides.
- Move your shoulders forward, up, backward, and down in a circle.
- Move both shoulders at the same time. Make the circles as big as you can. Do these 10 times.

Do these after you wake up in the morning, after lunch, and before you go to bed.
**Make a “W”:** You can do this standing, sitting, or lying on your back.

1. Form a “W” with your arms out to the side, palms forward.
   Bring your hands up to face level, or as high as you can without pain.
2. Pinch your shoulder blades together and down.
   - If you feel some pain, stop and hold. Try your pursed lip breathing.
   - If the pain goes away, bring your arms back a little more.
   - If the pain stays, hold where you can, squeeze your shoulder blades together for 5 seconds.

Bring your arms back to the starting position slowly. Do these 10 times.

**Arm circles:** Do one arm at a time.

1. Stand with your feet slightly apart.
   Raise your arm out to the side as high as is comfortable.
   - Make small, **backward** circles in the air with your arm. Keep your elbow straight. Slowly make the size of your arm circles bigger until they are as big as you can comfortably make them.
   - Do 10 circles. Lower your arm to your side.
2. Do the same as in step one, but make **forward** circles.
   - Do 10 circles.

Do these on each arm, 10 forward and 10 backward when you wake up in the morning and before you go to bed.

References

