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## ***Early Postoperative Exercises: Breast Surgery***

After your breast surgery, it is important to ask your doctor if it is ok to start doing the basic exercises in this handout. These exercises can be done while your post-surgical drains are still in place, as they focus on improving posture, reducing neck and shoulder stiffness after surgery, and stimulating the lymphatic system to remove fluid from the neck, chest, and arm. Do the exercises slowly and gently. Perform these exercises at least 2x per day. Your doctor will likely advise you not to raise your arm above the level of the shoulder until after your drainage tubes have been removed.

- 1. Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Lie on your back with knees bent. Place one hand on your belly and the other on your upper chest. Inhale slowly through your nose and feel your hand on your stomach move outward. The hand on your chest should move minimally, if at all. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, allowing belly to empty fully. The hand on your stomach will move in as you breathe out. Repeat 10x.



- 2. Wand Exercise to 90 degrees:** Lie on your back with knees bent. Hold a cane/wand across your lap, ***gently raise arms up to 90 degrees***, keeping your elbows straight. Use your unaffected arm to assist your stiff arm with the movement. Hold 5 seconds, then slowly return to start position. You can bend both elbows on the way back down if that is more comfortable. Repeat 10x.



- 3. Neck Rotation:** Sit with correct posture. Turn your head towards the side, looking over one shoulder. Hold 5 seconds, then return to start position. Perform 10x on one side, then repeat on the other side.



- 4. Neck Side Bend:** Sit with correct posture. Slowly bring your ear towards your shoulder. Hold 5 seconds, then return to start position. Keep your eyes and nose pointed straight ahead the entire time. Try not to shrug your shoulder. Perform 10x on one side, then repeat on the other side.



- 5. Shoulder Rolls:** While sitting or standing, gently roll both shoulders up, back, and down. Repeat 10x, and then perform in the opposite direction.



- 6. Shoulder Blade Squeezes:** While sitting or standing, bend elbows to 90 degrees. Gently squeeze shoulder blades together and rotate forearms and hands away from your body. Hold squeeze for 5 seconds, then relax. Do not shrug shoulders upward. Repeat 10x.



- 7. Elbow Bend:** While sitting or standing, bend your elbow (on the affected side) bringing your fist towards your shoulder and then lower to a fully straightened position. Repeat 10x.



- 8. Fist Clench:** With your elbow bent to 90 degrees (or your arm supported on a pillow), hold your hand as shown. Open and close your hand into a fist and repeat. If you cannot make a full fist, then make a partial fist. This can help with reducing swelling and stiffness. Repeat 10x.



*\*If you have an increase in pain with a specific exercise, discontinue and follow up with your PT.*