
Progressed Postoperative Exercises: Breast

Once your surgical drains have been removed and your physician has cleared you to begin working on range of motion overhead, the following exercises can be performed to help decrease side effects of your surgery and restore full mobility of your arm. It may be helpful to perform these exercises after a warm shower when muscles are warm and relaxed. Note: you should continue to include diaphragmatic breathing at least 2x daily and throughout your exercise sessions. Strengthening exercises will be added by your physical therapist, as appropriate.

- 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 (hand on your stomach will 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. Cane Exercise Overhead:** Lie on your back with your knees bent. Hold cane across your hips with both hands, palms up, elbows straight. Raise the cane overhead as far as you are able, using your unaffected ("good") arm to help lift the stiffer, weaker arm. Hold for 5 seconds, then slowly lower the cane back to your hips. Try each time to go a little further up and back to create a gentle stretch. Repeat 10x.



OR . . .



Assisted Lift with Unaffected Arm: grasp your affected arm and slowly raise it up upwards and towards overhead. Your affected arm should be relaxed and your good arm performing the work. Repeat 10x.

- 3. Shoulder Abduction with Wand:** Lie on your back with knees bent, holding a cane across your hips, with affected palm up. Using your “good” arm, help push the affected arm from your hip out and up as high as you can towards your head. Hold for 5 seconds, then slowly lower back to starting position. Try to go a little further each time to create a gentle stretch. Repeat 10x.



OR . . .



Snow Angel: Lie down on your back with knees bent. Place arms next to your side with palms facing up. Slowly slide your arms out to the side as far as you can while keeping your arms on the table/bed as if you were making a snow angel. Hold for 5 seconds and then return to starting position. Repeat 10x.

- 4. Butterfly Stretch:** Lie on your back with knees bent. Place your hands behind your head, clasp your fingers together, with elbows pointing toward the ceiling. Slowly lower your elbows toward the table/bed until you feel a gentle stretch across your chest. Hold for 10 seconds. Return to start position. Repeat 3-5x. Gradually increase the duration of stretch to 20-30 seconds, as tolerated.



5. Corner Stretch: Face the corner of a wall. Place your arms on the walls in the shape of a "W" so that your elbows are bent and pointed towards the ground. Take one step forward towards the corner. Bend your front knee until a gentle stretch is felt along the front of your chest and/or shoulders. Hold for 10 seconds. Return to start position. Repeat 3-5x. Gradually increase duration of stretch to 20-30 seconds, as tolerated.

