

PHYSICAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

Breast Surgery Guide



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Exercise Program

Because your surgery involved the removal of tissue from the breast and surrounding areas, it is quite normal to experience discomfort and swelling. Additionally, when lymph nodes have been removed, it is more likely that swelling will be present throughout the arm. Lymph nodes essentially function as collection reservoirs for fluid, and direct this fluid from one area to another. In your surgery, the lymph nodes from the underarm region collect fluid from the arm, shoulder area, and mammary glands, and direct it out of this region to your general circulation.

The following positioning guidelines, precautions, and exercises are recommended to help you return to your previous lifestyle as comfortably as possible, as well as avoid certain complications. It is very important to follow this program on a consistent basis!

Positioning Guidelines

Keep the arm elevated whenever possible, preferably above the level of the heart. When sitting for prolonged periods of time, such as when watching television, reading, or traveling, position yourself so that your arm is elevated and relaxed. Avoid keeping your elbow bent for prolonged periods of time, such as when reading, as this inhibits the drainage of fluid from the arm.

Precautions

As your surgery may have involved the removal of lymph nodes and interruption of the lymphatic channels from the arm, your body is less able to combat local injury or infection if it occurs. For this reason, you must make every effort to prevent injury/infection in the hand and arm. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that you follow these precautions:

1. Try to avoid cuts, scratches, pin pricks and hangnails.

- a. Injections, vaccinations, and blood samples should be done on the non-operative arm whenever possible.
- b. Be careful when manicuring; use cuticle cream and remover. Push softened cuticles back with a towel after bathing.
- c. Canvas gloves worn while gardening help prevent cuts; likewise a thimble could be used when sewing.
- d. Mild detergents or protective gloves when cleaning, and hand cream afterward, will prevent chapped hands.

2. Try to avoid any binding or constrictive clothing on the operative arm.

- a. Have blood pressure taken on non-operative side.
- b. Wear wrist watch or jewelry loosely.
- c. Wear loose fitting sleeves, gloves.

3. Initially after discharge, carry heavy objects on the non-operative side, including purses. Avoid carrying purses with shoulder straps on the operative side.

4. Try to avoid burns.

- a. Be careful when using the stove/oven; use oven mitts.
- b. Use caution when striking matches/lighters.
- c. Avoid overexposure to sunlight.

5. Avoid aggressive activity of your involved arm, such as golfing or bowling.

Again, it is anticipated that by following the above guidelines you will help yourself quickly return to a level of function similar to that prior to surgery. If you have any questions about this information, your physical therapist or physician would be happy to discuss them with you.

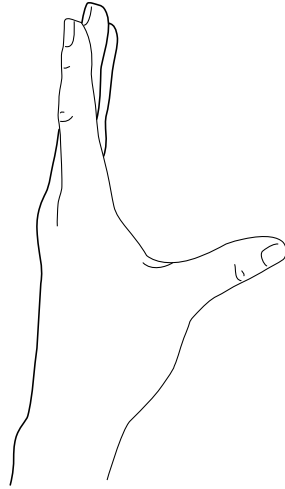
Exercise Program

The following exercises should be performed at least _____ times/day. Do them slowly, allowing time for a slow, comfortable stretch. Perform each exercise _____ times.

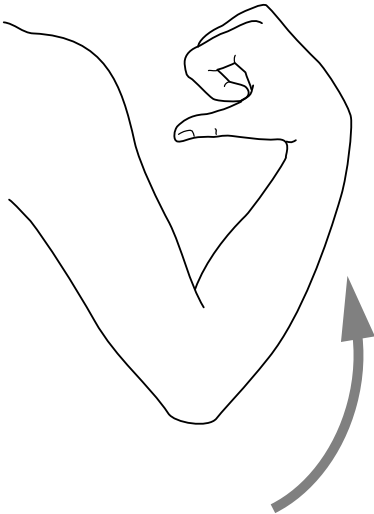
Bend fingers toward palm
(make a fist).



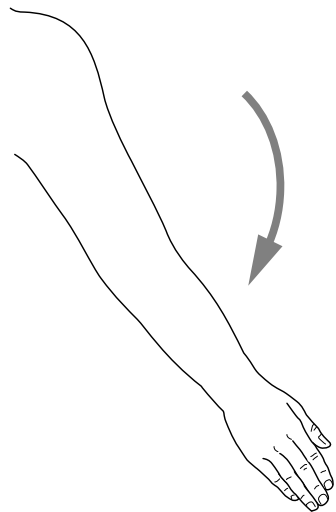
Return fingers to neutral
position (straighten fingers).



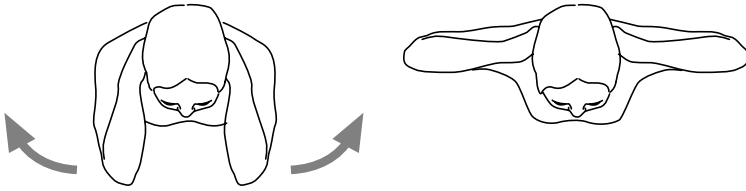
Bend elbow bringing forearm
and hand toward shoulder.



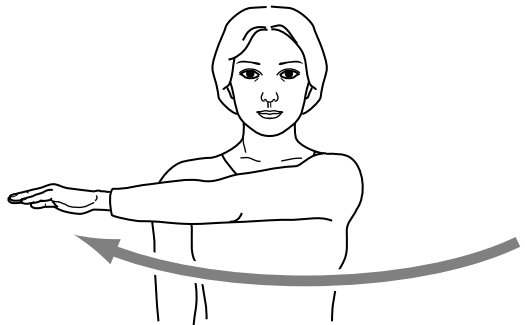
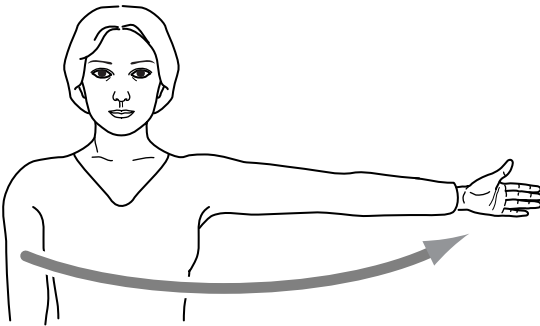
Return forearm and hand to
neutral position (arm straight).



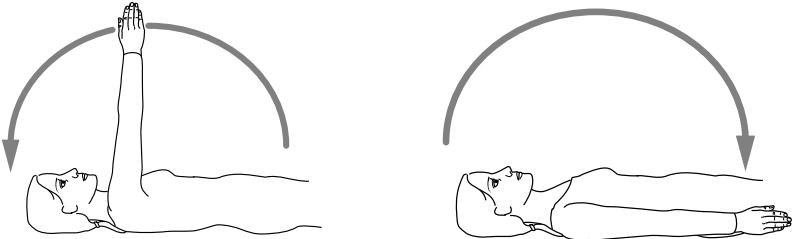
Clasp neck, elbows pointing straight ahead, move arms out to side as far as possible.



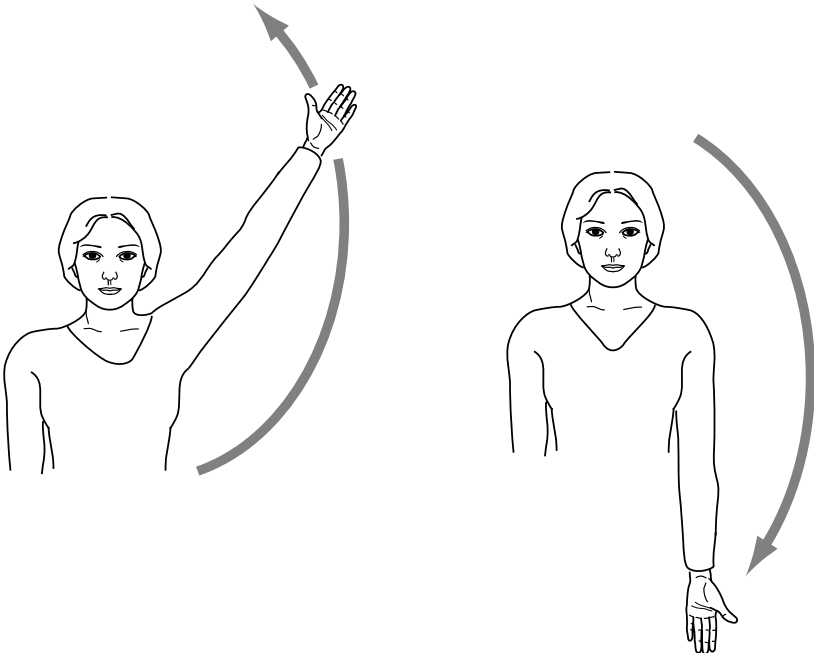
Move the arm out to the side at shoulder level, then reach for the opposite shoulder, keeping arm as near the face as possible. Return to starting position.



Arm at your side, keeping it as close to your body as possible, thumb pointing straight up, elbow straight, raise arm overhead as far as is comfortable. Return arm to side.



Arm at your side, palm up, elbow straight, move arm away from your body, raising up as far as is comfortable. Return arm to side.



Arms at sides, back of hand facing forward. Bend elbow and carry back of hand over buttocks to waistline and upper back. Try to reach the shoulder blade.

