

EXERCISES AFTER BREAST SURGERY

Be sure to initiate an active exercise program only when cleared to do so by your physician!
You are cleared to begin in 1 week 2 weeks 3 weeks after surgery.

1. “Creep up the Wall”

Choose an area of wall space which is frequently passed during the day and keep a pencil handy to that area. With both feet against the wall and holding the pencil in your affected arm, begin to “creep” up the wall until your arm feels tight and can go no higher. Make a little mark on the wall with the pencil for future reference. As often as you can during the day, pick up the pencil and try to beat your previous mark on the wall, stretching against the wall to gain distance. Even if your progress is only ¼ inch per day, you will be gaining a full inch every four days toward your goal of full extension.

2. “One pound lift”

Use a one pound hand weight or create a weight by placing a one pound can of food into a sock, tying a knot in the top of the sock. Keep this weight in full view of your favorite chair or wherever you might sit during the day for coffee, to read, or to watch TV. With the weight held in the affected hand and with the arm straight, lift ten times to the side as high as possible, then lift ten times to the front as high as possible.

3. “Hair Brushing” or “Circles”

Keep a hairbrush on your vanity or in a bathroom as a reminder to do this exercise any time you pass that area or any time you may use the bathroom during the day. With your head straight and standing upright, brush your hair ten times creating full circles with your shoulder (if you prefer to do so, use an imaginary hairbrush, making the same motions!).

A handy alternative, if you prefer to do it, is to simply lean toward the surgery side and rotate the arm at the shoulder in ever increasing circles, building eventually to a full “windmill” range for the arm.

4. “Over the door”

Pick a door in the house which you pass frequently and hang over the top of the door a piece of rope, and old belt, or an old necktie. Be sure that the rope is in full view as a reminder to do this exercise. Grasp the rope with both hands on either side of the door and begin a “pulley” exercise, pulling one arm against the other ten times as high as you can possibly reach.

****Do two sets of each exercise daily.**

These four exercises, will generally lead to a full return of arm motion within three to four weeks. If you find that you simply cannot do this on your own, or you become frustrated by a lack of progress, you should consider working actively with a physical therapist to reach your goal of a full range of motion in your affected limb. If you find that you still have limited range of motion after performing the above exercises for one month, please call the Bass Breast Center and we will be happy to refer you to a physical therapist.

Remember that modern surgical procedures for breast disease do not remove any of the muscles attached to the arm. With an active exercise program to stretch and remodel scar tissue and rebuild muscle, you should look forward to a resumption of full and normal arm activity.

Please call us with any questions or difficulties you may encounter.
406-751-6488

