

*If you have any questions, please talk with your occupational or physical therapist.*

## Regaining Physical Resilience After Breast Cancer Surgery

After breast cancer surgery, it is important to do exercises to get your arm and shoulder moving again. The goal is to improve your flexibility and help you get back to your usual activities.

You can do the exercises described in this brochure as soon as your physician says it is OK. Remember to go at your own pace. Everyone's exercise ability is different.

**Do these exercises \_\_\_\_\_ times per day.**

It is best to do all of these exercises slowly and smoothly to avoid pain. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Always start with the warmup exercises. When you are standing, keep your knees slightly bent and your body straight. It may help to practice in front of a mirror.

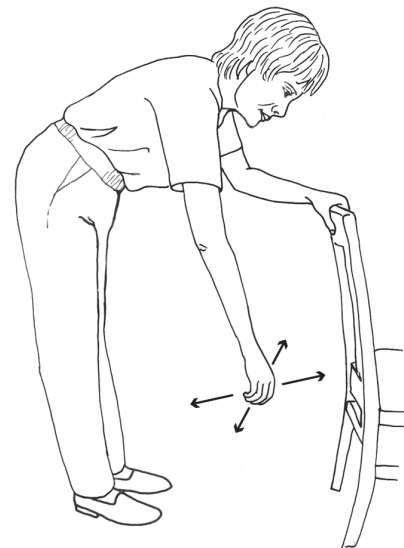
### Warm-up exercises

These exercises are designed to prepare your muscles for stretching. They will help prevent injury, increase circulation to the exercised areas, and increase the benefits of the movement and flexibility exercises that will follow.

#### **Warm-up 1**

Bend at the waist with your affected arm dangling freely. Swing your arm forward and back, then side to side and finally in a circle in both directions.

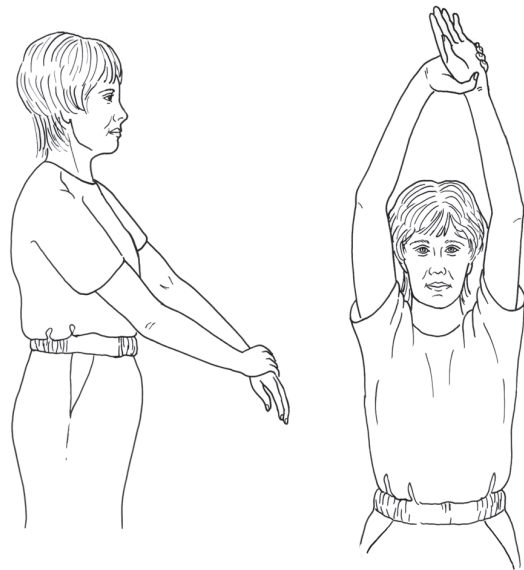
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Warm-up 2**

Clasp your hands in front. Start with your arms down and raise them upward as far as possible.

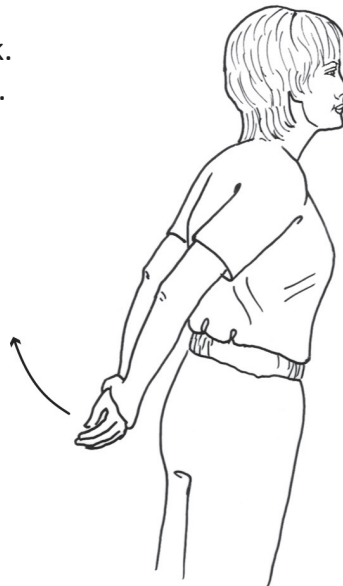
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Warm-up 3**

Start with your arms clasped behind your back. Move your arms upward away from your back.

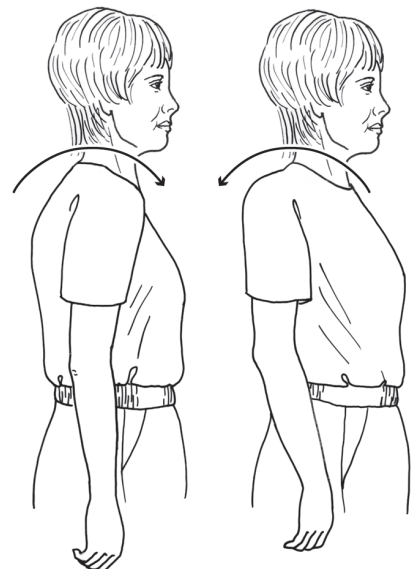
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Warm-up 4**

With your arms relaxed at your sides, rotate your shoulders in a forward circular motion. Repeat in the opposite direction.

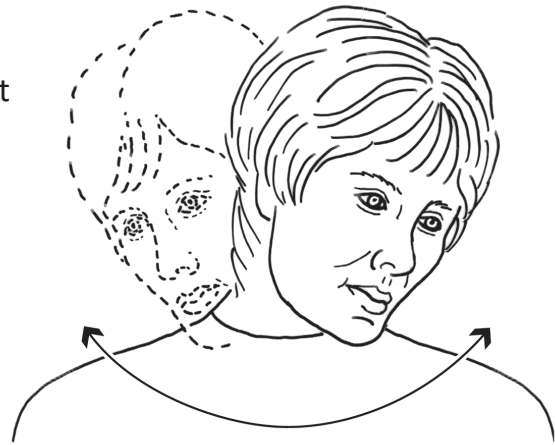
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



### **Warm-up 5**

Tuck your chin slightly and slowly rotate fully to the right. Roll your head gently across your chest to look downward and to the left.

Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



### **Warm-up 6**

Lie on your back holding the wrist of your affected arm. Pull your arm over your head.

Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



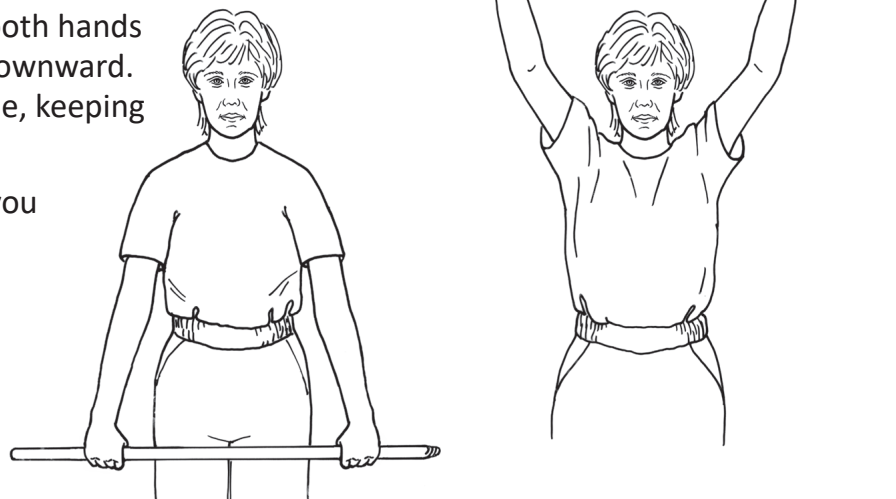
## **Movement and flexibility exercises**

Do these exercises slowly and smoothly. Start exercising slowly and do more as you are able.

### **Exercise 1**

Hold a broomstick with both hands with your palms facing downward. Raise it as high as possible, keeping your elbows straight.

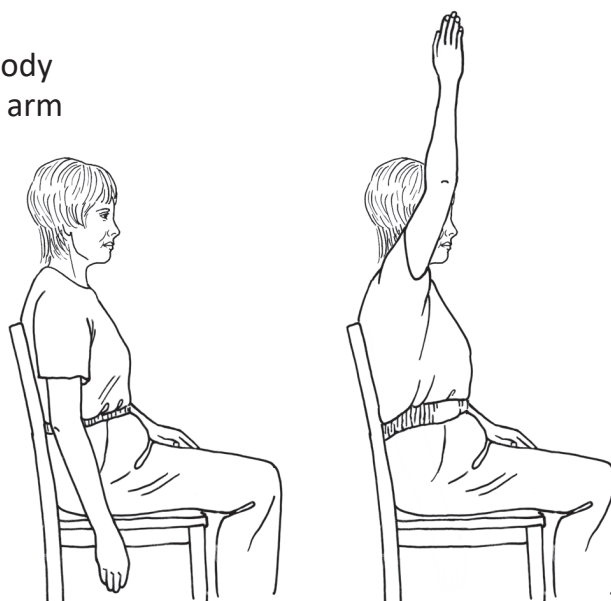
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 2**

Start with your affected arm close to your body with your thumb facing forward. Raise your arm over your head as far as possible.

Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 3**

Stand facing a wall and slide the hand of your affected arm up the wall. Use your opposite hand to help, if needed. Lean into the wall, keeping your elbow straight, and try to touch your armpit to the wall.

**Do not bounce.** Hold for 5 seconds.

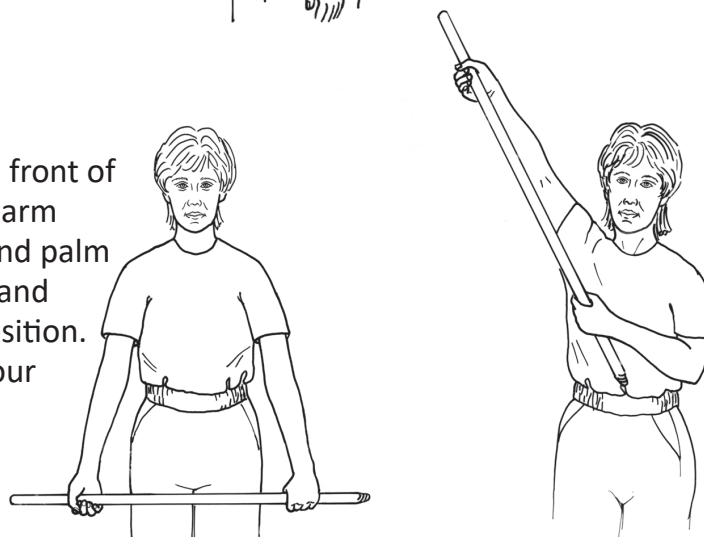
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 4**

Hold a broomstick with both hands in front of your body. The hand of your affected arm should be palm up and your other hand palm down. Swing the broomstick upward and out to the side. Return to the start position. The arm moving up and away from your body should be palm up.

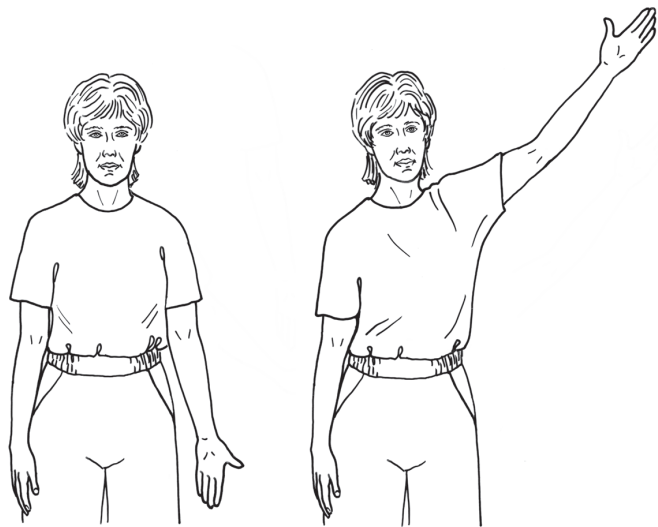
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 5**

With your affected arm at your side and your thumb pointing outward, move your arm upward and away from your body, leading with your thumb. Keep your elbow straight.

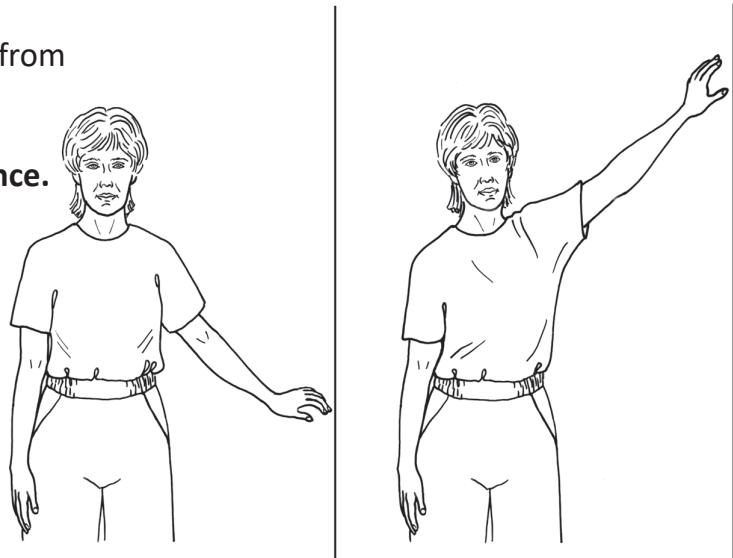
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 6**

Stand sideways at an arm's distance from the wall. Start with your fingers low, move them slowly upward along the wall as high as possible. **Do not bounce.**

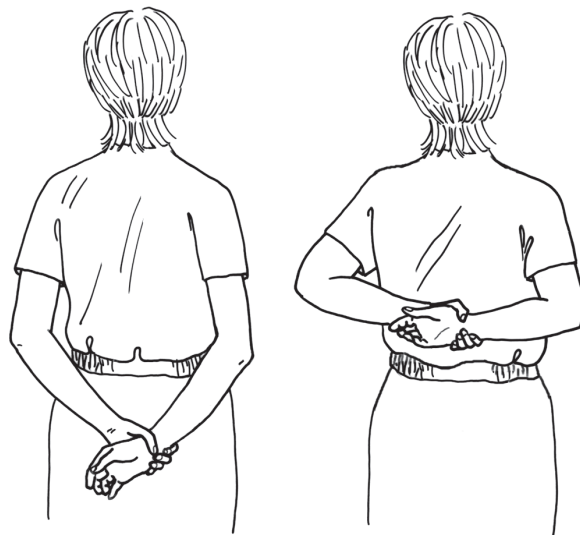
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 7**

With both arms behind your back, hold your wrist. Gently bend your elbows, sliding your wrists up toward your shoulder blades.

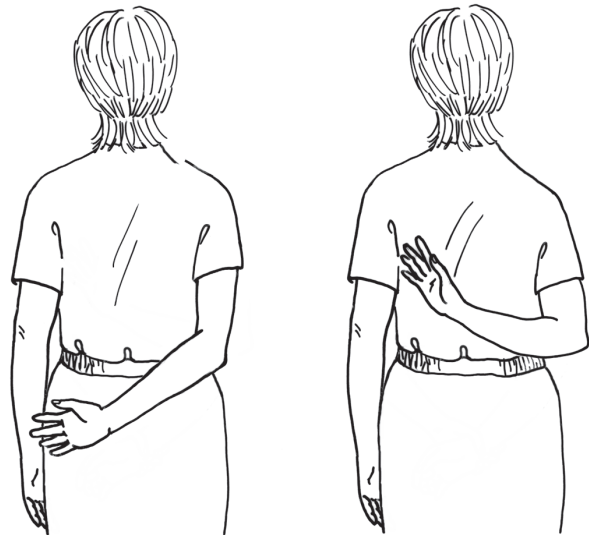
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 8**

With your affected arm behind your back, bend at your elbow and try to reach the opposite shoulder blade.

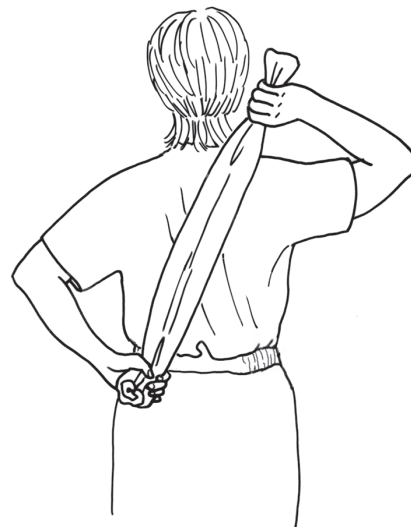
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 9**

Grasp a towel behind your back with 1 arm over your shoulder and 1 arm under your shoulder. Hold 5 seconds, then switch the towel to your other shoulder and repeat.

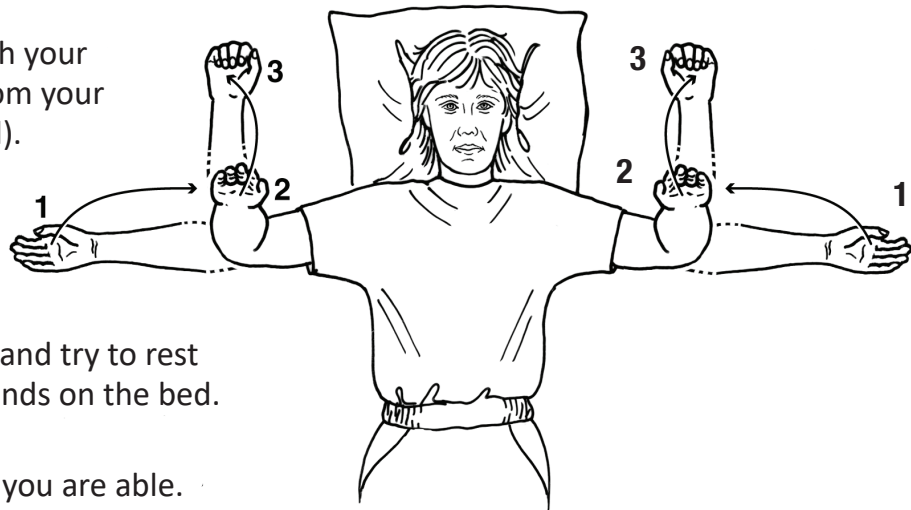
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 10**

1. Lie on your back with your arms straight out from your sides (shoulder level).
2. Bend your arms at the elbow and point your fingers toward the ceiling.
3. Roll your arms back and try to rest the backs of your hands on the bed. Hold for 5 seconds.

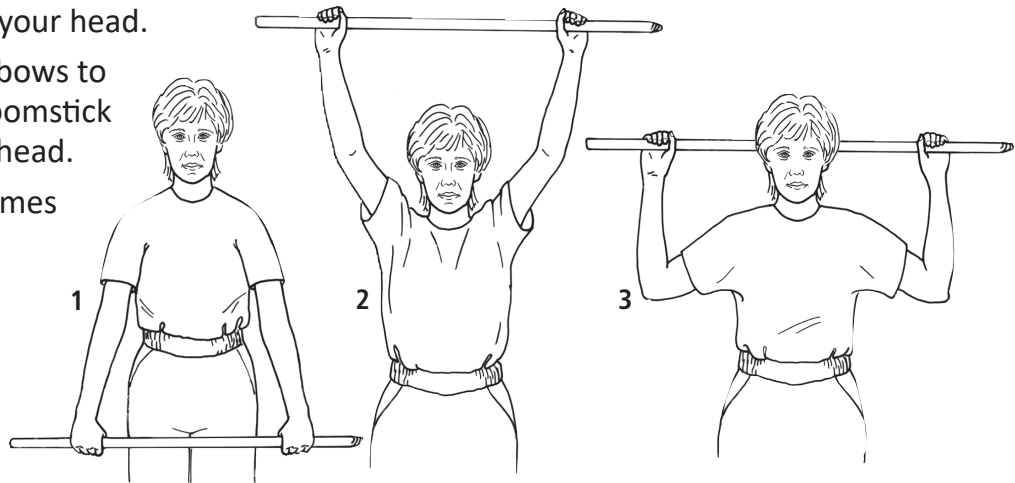
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 11**

1. Hold a broomstick with both hands.
2. Raise it over your head.
3. Bend your elbows to place the broomstick behind your head.

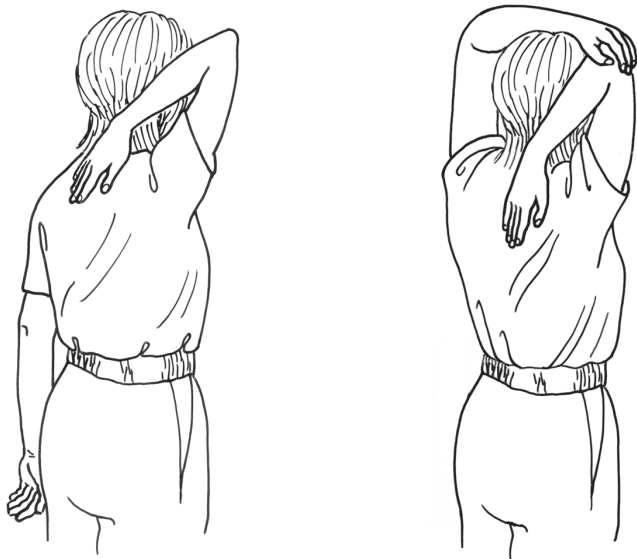
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 12**

Lift your affected arm over your shoulder and touch your opposite shoulder blade. Use your opposite hand to gently push your elbow down. Hold 5 seconds.

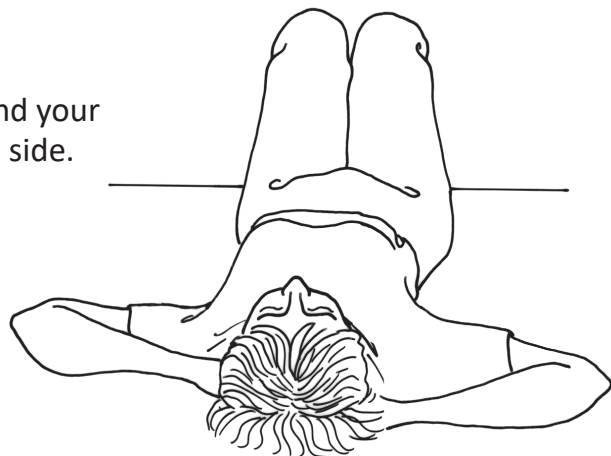
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 13**

Lie on your back. Position your hands behind your head, pointing your elbows outward to the side. Hold for 5 seconds.

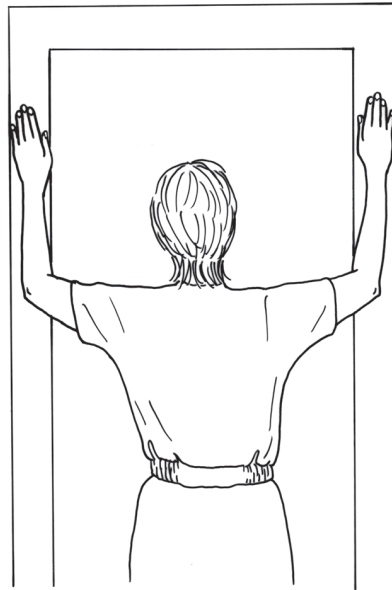
Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.





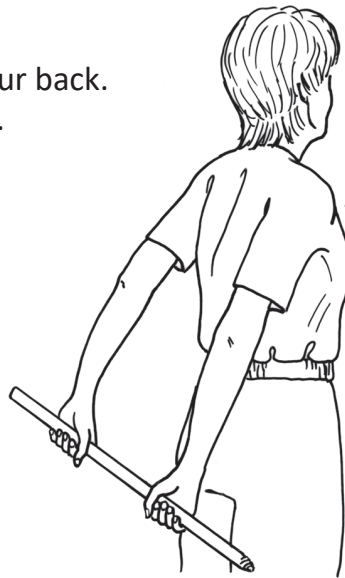
**Exercise 14**

Standing in a doorway, place your shoulders and elbows as shown. Lean forward, stretching your arms backward. Hold for 5 seconds. **Do not bounce.** Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 15**

Hold a broomstick with both hands behind your back. Pull your arms back and away from your body. Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



**Exercise 16**

Move your affected arm out to the side at shoulder level, then reach for your opposite shoulder. Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.





### **Exercise 17**

Clasp your hands behind your back. Gently pull your affected arm and tilt your head to the same side. Hold for 5 seconds.

Repeat 5 to 10 times as you are able.



## **Lymphedema**

Lymphedema is build-up of lymph fluid caused by a block in your lymphatic system. This could happen during your surgery. Lymphedema is often a long-term condition that could lead to more serious medical conditions.

### **Symptoms**

Common sites of lymphedema are in your arms and legs. It may also happen in your neck, face, trunk, abdomen and/or genitals. Symptoms may not start to appear until long after your procedure, if they happen at all. Watch for early signs and symptoms of lymphedema. Contact your physician if you have these symptoms:

- Swelling in your breast, chest, shoulder, arm or leg
- Skin feeling tight or hard, changing in texture, looking red, or feeling hot
- New aching, tingling, numbness, fullness, heaviness or other discomfort in the area
- Less movement or flexibility in nearby joints (such as your hand, wrist or shoulder)
- Trouble fitting your arm into a jacket or sleeve, or trouble fitting into or buttoning your pants
- Collars, rings, watches, and/or bracelets feeling tight even though you have not gained weight

## **When to call your physician**

Stop exercising and call your physician right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Increased weakness or loss of balance
- Pain that gets worse
- Heaviness, aching or tightness in your arm
- Unusual swelling or swelling that gets worse
- Headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, or new numbness or tingling in your arms or chest

If you have any questions, ask your physician.