

# Activity After Breast Reconstruction

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Following breast reconstruction, you will have additional precautions to follow depending on your type of reconstruction. There may be slight variations depending on your plastic surgeon's preference.

## For all patients:

- Sponge bathe only until the dressings or drains are removed, unless otherwise instructed by your surgeon.
- Use pillows to keep your arms elevated above your heart at night for the first week to decrease swelling.
- Following surgery is it important to pace yourself. Post-operatively, fatigue is normal. It is important to take pain medication as prescribed.

## Tissue Expander/Implant:

- Avoid lifting more than 10 pounds for the first 4 weeks after surgery.
- No arm range of motion greater than 90 degrees (level of shoulders) on the affected side until drains are removed.

## Lat Flap (Latissimus Dorsi Flap):

- Avoid any activity requiring resistive motion pulling downwards, such as closing the trunk door of a large car or pulling down to close a tight window, for 8 weeks after surgery.
- No arm range of motion greater than 90 degrees (level of shoulders) on the affected side until drains are removed.
- Do not wear a bra until cleared by your surgeon.
- Getting out of bed depends on what type of reconstruction you had. If you had both breasts reconstructed, you may use your core (abdominal muscles). If only one side was reconstructed, you may roll to the opposite side and use that hand.
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds until your drains are removed. This normally happens 2-3 weeks after surgery.

## Return to Activity:

- After surgery try to walk around for a few minutes 2-3 times per day.
- You may begin low impact exercises 4 weeks after your surgery.
- Please check with your surgeon regarding a return to cardiovascular exercise or other rigorous activities.
- Once your drains have been removed, please begin to perform the exercises below.

## Exercises to Maximize Your Shoulder Range of Motion

They should be performed 2-3 times per day, 5-10 repetitions each. They are designed to improve the movement of the arm and shoulders. They should be done slowly and rhythmically. They may be performed in a sitting position.

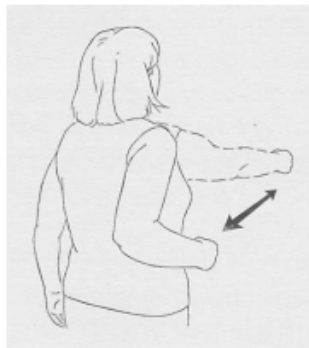
### Shoulder Rolls

Inhale and bring shoulders up, back, then exhale and relax shoulders down.



### Arm Saw

With elbow bent at 90°, pull backward to bend elbow more, then move arm forward, straightening elbow.



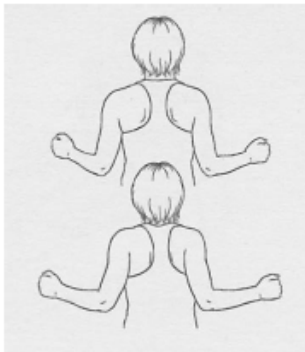
### Shoulder Walk Up Exercises

With elbow straight, use fingers to “crawl” up wall until you feel a gentle stretch.



### Shoulder Rotation

With elbows bent to 90°, pinch shoulder blades together and rotate arms out, keeping elbows bent.



### Back Scratch

Reach behind back and hold hands together. Gently slide hands up back and slowly return to starting position.



AFTER TISSUE EXPANDER PLACEMENT, DO NOT TRY THIS EXERCISE UNTIL CLEARED BY YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON.

### Butterfly Exercise

Place hands behind head and gently bring elbows back.



AFTER RECONSTRUCTION, KEEP ELBOWS BELOW SHOULDER LEVEL UNTIL DRAINS ARE REMOVED.

For **lymphedema** precautions and activity guidelines related to **lymph node surgery**, please see the **Lymphedema Fact Sheet**.