

Axillary Lymph Node Dissection: Instructions/Exercises

The following activities have been approved by your physician to help you increase the motion and strength of your shoulder and improve your posture after surgery. Your physician can answer more specific questions you might have: for example, when to expect full range of motion and the amount of weight you may lift when exercising your operated arm.

When Should I Start?

Exercises should be started immediately following surgery. Several exercises require above-the-shoulder movement and should be started after the drains are removed. These exercises are boxed and noted as "drain out only" exercises.

Why Should I Exercise?

Posture exercises are important because there is a tendency after surgery to "protect" the surgical area, which often leads to poor posture. The poor posture over time can lead to upper back and neck problems. The shoulder mobility exercises are done to prevent a frozen shoulder, which can occur very quickly when the shoulder is not used. A frozen shoulder can be very painful, so it's essential that you begin the shoulder mobility exercises as soon as possible, refer to the descriptions below.

When Can Exercises Be Discontinued?

Exercises can be discontinued when your posture is good, you can perform all the mobility and strengthening exercises with ease, and you are using your arm for everyday activities.

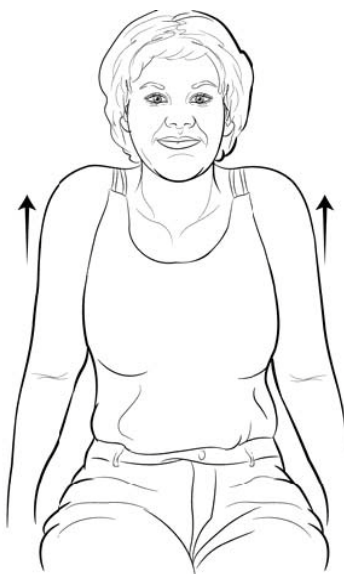
Posture

Your posture, or the way you carry your head, neck and trunk, will ultimately affect the movement of your shoulder. Maintaining correct posture will increase your overall comfort in the post-operative period. It is helpful to correct your posture by looking in a mirror frequently during the day. Check to see that your back is erect as possible, shoulders are level and that your chin is tucked.

Perform these exercises slowly, 10 repetitions each, twice daily. Continue until they become part of your regular daily activities.

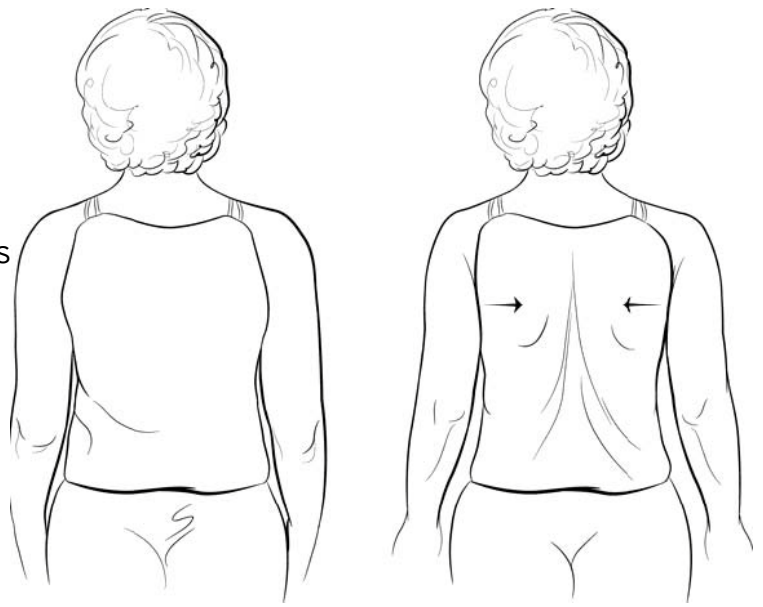
Posture Exercises

Chin Tuck: Sitting in a relaxed position, back erect, move your head backwards as far as possible, tucking in your chin. Make a double chin as you continue looking straight ahead. Hold for 5 seconds, relax and repeat.



Shoulder Shrug: Shrug your shoulders up and toward your ears, hold for 5 seconds, relax and repeat.

Squeeze your shoulder blades together, hold for 5 seconds, relax



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Roll your shoulders up, back and down in a circular motion, relax and repeat.

Shoulder Mobility

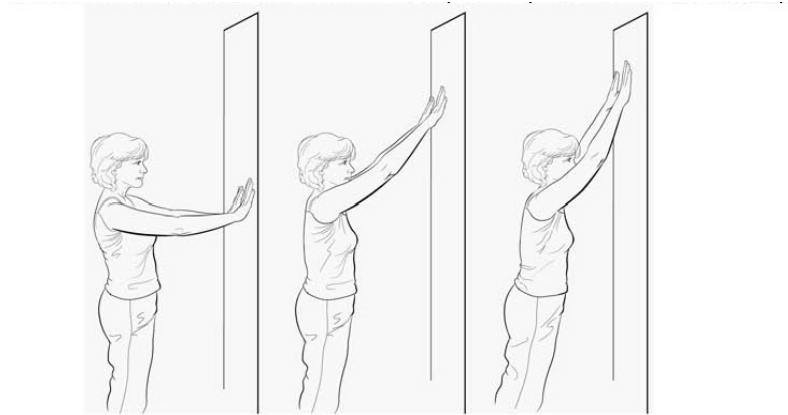
Using your arm in daily functional activities is an excellent means of regaining the shoulder mobility that you had before surgery. Some examples of these activities are: washing and brushing your hair, drying your back with a towel, fastening your brassiere, letting your arms swing as you walk and reaching into cabinets. The following exercises will help you regain full shoulder mobility. Perform these exercises slowly 5 repetitions each, twice daily. Continue these exercises until full arm mobility is achieved.

Mobility Exercises

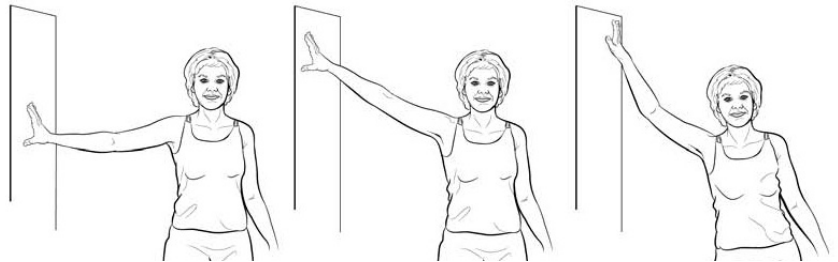
Perform this exercise only AFTER drains are removed

While standing arm length away from the wall:

1. Face the wall, slowly walk both hands up the wall as far as possible. Step toward the wall, lean into the arm, hold for 5 seconds, relax and repeat.



2. Turn your side to the wall, slowly walk your affected hand up the wall as far as possible. Step toward the wall, lean into the arm, hold for 5 seconds. Relax, and repeat.



3. While sitting erect with hands at nape of neck, move elbows forward touch together and then push elbows apart, relax and repeat

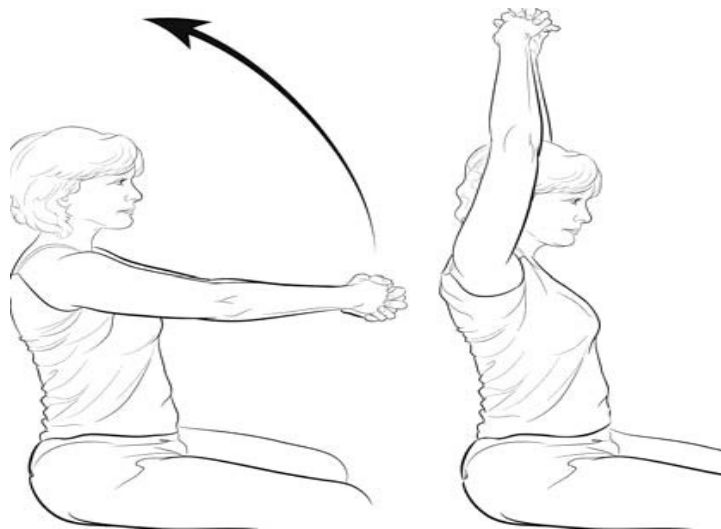


4. While sitting erect, put hands on shoulders and circle elbows forward up, out and down. Repeat.



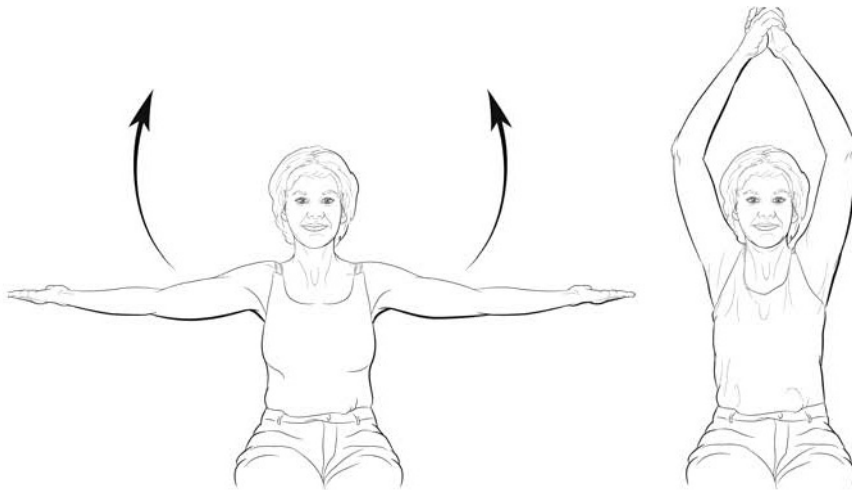
Perform this exercise only AFTER drains are removed

While sitting or lying down, clasp hands, lift arms up and over your head. Keep elbows as straight as possible, relax and repeat.



Perform this exercise only AFTER drains are removed

While sitting or lying down, move your arms outward away from your sides, clasp hands overhead; return to sides. Keep elbows straight, relax and repeat.



Increasing Arm Strength

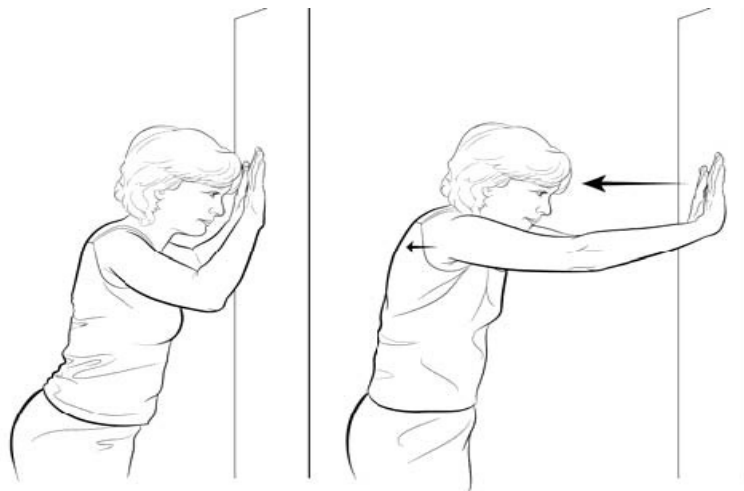
Daily functional activities and hobbies will also help to increase your arm strength. Some examples of these activities are grocery shopping, doing laundry, washing the car and preparing meals. For the first eight weeks after surgery, strengthening for the operated side is limited to lifting 10 pounds or less. After that time, check with your physician about lifting heavier loads. The following exercises are designed to help you regain the strength you had before your operation.

Remember to always warm up your arm with the mobility exercises before performing strengthening work.

Perform these exercises slowly, 5 repetitions each, twice daily. Gradually increase the number of repetitions as tolerated. Continue these exercises until full preoperative strength is achieved.

Strengthening Exercises

Standing tall, and facing a wall, put both hands on the wall at shoulder height. Start with your elbows bent. Push away from the wall, straightening your elbows and rounding your back. Hold for 5 seconds, relax and repeat.



Beginning Other Activities

As you become more comfortable with your improved mobility and strength you may want to gradually return to an enjoyable sport or get involved in a structured exercise program. Participation in water exercise classes or dance classes with emphasis on gentle sustained upper extremity movement may be useful. A recommended program would meet 2 to 3 times weekly, consisting of a warm-up with slow stretching exercises, followed by the primary activity, and ending with a cool-down session. Check with your physician for details about when you may begin these activities.

Important Tips to Remember

Activity

- Maintain good posture habits throughout the day.
- Perform your exercises slowly, twice daily
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 6 weeks following your surgery. This means you cannot lift children, purses, suitcases, cats, dogs, groceries or

garbage **heavier than 10 pounds**. (a gallon of milk weighs 9 pounds). It also means pushing a grocery cart, pushing yourself out of bed, or pulling yourself up using the bed siderails cannot be done using your affected arm.

- Do use your arm in daily activities.

Swelling

- If you notice slight swelling or tightness in your arm, the swelling may be decreased by squeezing a ball in your hand while keeping your arm elevated higher than your heart.
- Call the office if you are experiencing persistent swelling. Notify us that you have had lymph nodes removed.
- Swelling can be caused by eating salty foods or can occur on hot days.

Infection

When your lymph nodes are removed, you will need to watch for the following signs of infection:

- redness
- swelling
- warmth
- tenderness in your arm

Notify the office if you experience any of these.