

Physiotherapy POST MASTECTOMY



Physiotherapy Department

What is Mastectomy?

Mastectomy is the removal of a breast and related tissues including axillary lymph nodes. A partial or full mastectomy may be performed based on physician's recommendations.

Why is physiotherapy important after Mastectomy?

Physiotherapy after any breast cancer surgery will reduce pain, speed-up recovery, improve shoulder function, prevent lymphedema, and assist in returning to normal activities of daily living.

What are the common physical complications after surgery?

The degree of difficulty patients encounter with any of these complications varies with the extent of the disease, surgical procedure, age and co-existing problems.

- Limited upper limb range of motion and strength.
- Chest pain.
- Scarring at the incision site.
- Lymphedema (swelling of the upper limb) due to removal of axillary lymph nodes.
- Scapular (Shoulder blade) winging may occur as a result of injury to the muscles that stabilize the scapula.
- Postural changes and balance impairments due to loss of breast weight.

When do I start physiotherapy?

Early physiotherapy intervention is considered essential to an efficient recovery. Physiotherapy will commence

immediately following the surgery. A treatment plan is designed to meet individual needs and goals.

Post Mastectomy Exercises:

The following exercises are recommended following mastectomy to prevent complications as detailed. At first, the exercises should be slow and gentle. Take deep breathes, in and out, as you do each exercise.

1. Stand up as straight as possible. Roll your shoulder forward in a circular movement. Repeat in opposite direction.
Do 5 sets of 5 circles in each direction.



2. Place fingertips on shoulders of same side and slowly raise elbows upward until they are in line with the height of your shoulders. Repeat 5 times.
3. Hold a stick in both hands with your palms facing down. Lift the stick up over your head as far as you can. Use your unaffected arm to help lift the stick until you feel a stretch in your affected arm. Hold for 5 seconds. Lower arms and repeat 5 to 7 times. Progress to performing in standing and sitting.

4. Hold your stick in both hands as shown. Swing the bar to the side using your unaffected arm to assist in lifting the affected arm out. Do four swings to each side, take a 30-second break, and repeat the set. Remember to limit arm overhead reaching 90 degrees for at least 7 days post-axillary node removal to reduce the risk of lymphedema and seroma.



Lymphedema

It is the swelling of the arm on the side of the affected breast, after axillary node dissection and radiation as a result of the accumulation of the lymph fluid.

A few Don'ts:

- DO NOT lift/push/pull heavy objects.
- DO NOT overstretch your arm.
- DO NOT suddenly jerk/jar your arm.
- DO NOT use your arm in one position for a long time e.g. knitting, typing, and driving.
- DO NOT take injections, blood sample, blood pressure reading from the affected arm.
- DO NOT wear jewels or tight clothing (e.g. wrist bands, watches, tight bra straps).
- DO NOT pull or remove your nail cuticles without nail clippers.
- DO NOT expose to extremes of temperatures (hot or cold weather and baths).

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