

# Exercises Following Axillary Dissection



**It is natural for your skin and muscles to feel tight after surgery. Gradual introduction to specific exercises will help prevent stiffness and will improve your movement.**

These exercises are designed so that you can perform them at home. **The frequency and duration of the exercises are individualised for you by your physiotherapist, and this decision will be made based on the extent of**

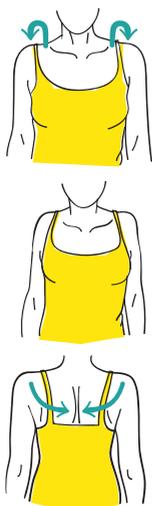
**your surgery, possible complications and your fitness level.** All movements should be performed within your comfort levels. This is to ensure that you do not place unnecessary tension on your new surgical incision site and increase leakage from your wound or drain site. If you experience strong pain cease the exercises and notify your health care professional at your next appointment.

## EARLY EXERCISES WHILE YOU ARE IN HOSPITAL

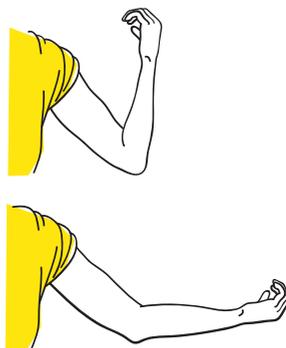
Arm movement is permitted within limits of discomfort below shoulder height. Elbow and hand movements are unrestricted. Exercises can be performed for 10–20 repetitions, 3–4 times per day.

### 1. Shoulder circles

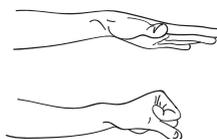
Slowly lift shoulders up, back and down in a circle, gently opening chest.



### 2. Elbow bend and straighten



### 3. Fist open and close



**If you are unsure about your exercises, please ask to speak to a physiotherapist or your treating health professional.**

## EXERCISES WHEN YOU ARE HOME (1–4 weeks after surgery)

Gradually progress to these exercises once you are home. If you notice an increase in wound drainage, please reduce the frequency and intensity of exercise until the drainage settles again. Exercises can be performed for 10 repetitions, 3 times per day.

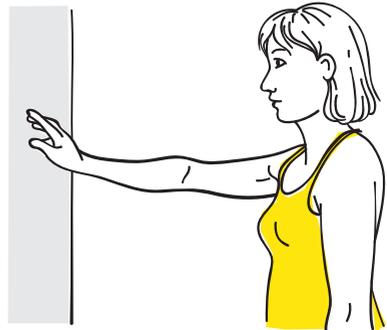
### 4. Arm lift

Lying on your back with your knees bent. Hold onto a long stick or clasp your hands together. Use your non-operated arm to assist your operated arm to lift up in an arc to around shoulder height or within the comforts of your drain.



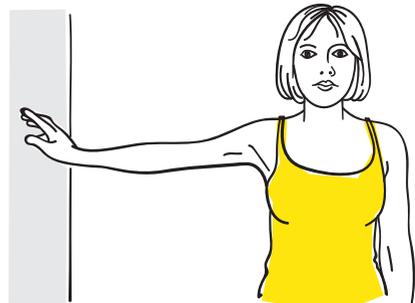
### 5. Walk fingers up the wall (facing wall)

Walk your fingers slowly up the wall. Relax shoulders. Then walk fingers slowly down. You should feel a comfortable pull in your armpit. Do not arch lower back.



### 6. Walk fingers up the wall (to side)

Walk your fingers slowly up the wall. Relax shoulders. Then walk fingers slowly down. You should feel a comfortable pull in your armpit. Do not arch lower back.



## ADVANCED EXERCISES (after drains have been removed)

The exercises should be slowly progressed to an advanced level once your drains have been removed. It is expected that you will regain normal shoulder movement within 4-6 weeks after removal of drains. You may still feel stiff in your movement so these exercises may need to be continued. Please note these exercises are to be used as a guide only. Aim for 3×10 seconds of gentle stretch, 3 times per day.

### 7. Shoulder rotation

Lie on back with knees bent (as in Exercise 4). Place hands behind head and gently allow your elbows to drop towards the bed, stretching your chest and armpits.



Your referrer's details:

### 8. Armpit stretches

As per Exercise 5 and 6 but walking fingers further towards end of range.

You can do the same exercises seated in front of a desk. Lean forward and walk fingers forwards on the desk.



Strengthening exercises may also be appropriate once full range has been achieved.

Please speak to your physiotherapist or health professional for further progression of exercises.

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