

## Warm-up and cool-down

Do exercises 1 and 2 to warm up before you do any other exercises.

### Shoulder shrugs



### Shoulder circling

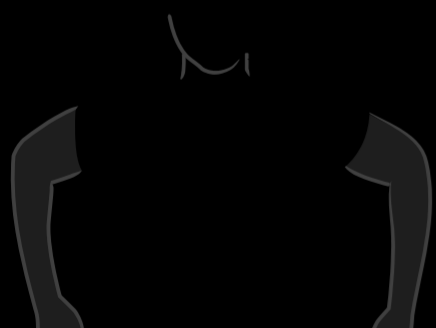


## Basic exercises

Do exercises 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

In these exercises, do not raise your arms above shoulder height.

### Back scratching



### Winging it



### Bent arm



Alternative



### Arm lifts



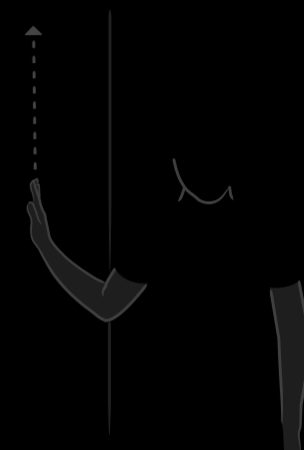
### Elbow push



## More advanced exercises

Do exercises 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200.

### Wall climbing



Alternative

**First week after surgery**  
Do the warm-up, basic exercises and cool-down.

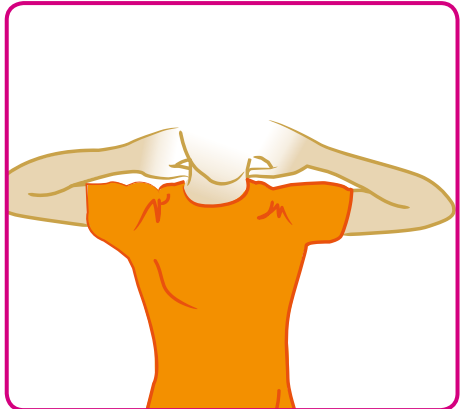
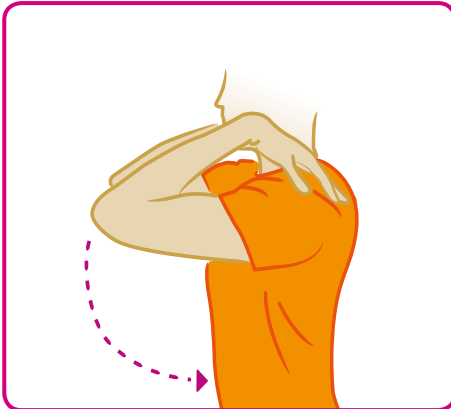
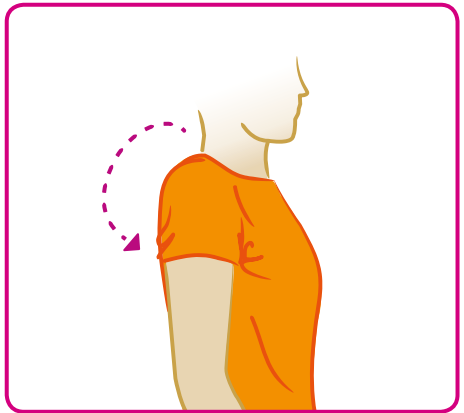
**Second week and beyond**  
Do the warm-up, basic and more advanced exercises, and cool-down.

These timings are meant as a guide, and you should complete the exercises at your own pace.

1. 10 minutes  
your surgery.  
2. 10 minutes  
on to the next one.  
3. 10 minutes  
morning, around midday and in the evening.

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However, a stretching or pulling sensation is  
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100. 10 minutes  
breast care nurse or physiotherapist.

## Exercises after breast cancer surgery



## Why do the exercises?

These exercises aim to help you regain arm and shoulder movement after surgery for breast cancer.

They have been devised with the help of breast surgeons, breast care nurses and physiotherapists.

The exercises are suitable for people who have had:

- breast surgery
- lymph node removal
- radiotherapy.

The exercises in this leaflet can help:

- get back the range of movement and function you had before surgery
- improve symptoms of tight scars and cording – when you feel as if you have a tight cord running from the armpit to your elbow in your affected arm, or sometimes down the whole length of the arm
- prevent long-term problems with arm and shoulder movement, posture and stiffness
- reduce the risk of lymphoedema – swelling caused by a build-up of lymph fluid.

If you're worried about any of these, or have symptoms of cording, speak to your breast care nurse.

## If you've had breast reconstruction

If you've recently had a breast reconstruction, talk to the surgeon who did the operation or your physiotherapist before you start or continue with any exercises, and follow their advice.

## When should I start the exercises?

Start the exercises as soon as you can, ideally the day after your surgery.

In the first week after your surgery, you can start the warm-up and basic exercises.

In the second week, you can do the more advanced exercises as well (if you have removable stitches or a drain, wait until these have been removed).

These timings are meant as a guideline only. Complete the exercises at your own pace.

## How much exercise should I do?

You should do the exercises every day.

Do each exercise 5 times before you move on to the next one.

Try to do the exercises 3 times a day – in the morning, around midday and in the evening.

Don't worry if you can't manage to do all the exercises every time. For example, during radiotherapy you may find the exercises more difficult.

Do as much as you feel able to at a pace you're comfortable with.

## How hard are the exercises?

The more you do the exercises, the easier they should become.

You shouldn't feel pain when doing the exercises. However, a stretching or pulling sensation is normal.

Always do the warm-up at the start and the cool-down at the end of each session to help avoid injury and prevent stiffness.

If you become concerned about your range of movement or level of discomfort, speak to your breast care nurse or physiotherapist.

## How long should I do the exercises for?

Muscles seize up very quickly if they're not used, so it's important to do these exercises as part of your daily routine.

Arm stiffness or weakness can occur long after surgery and following radiotherapy.

If you've just had surgery, keep doing the exercises until you have got back the range of movement you had before your operation. Continue doing the exercises if you're going on to have radiotherapy as they will help your shoulder flexibility.

If you've had radiotherapy, it's a good idea to do the exercises for as long as you're still experiencing tightness and stiffness, and you may want to continue doing them after this.

Talk to your breast care nurse or physiotherapist if you're not sure how long to keep up the exercise programme or if you have any concerns about your recovery after surgery.

## Reasons to stop exercising

Stop doing the exercises and speak to your surgeon or breast care nurse if you have:

- a seroma (a collection of fluid under the arm or in the breast or chest wall)
- wound infection or healing problems
- pain that gets worse during these exercises, or continues once you've finished them.

It's important to start the exercises again once these issues have been resolved and your surgeon or breast care nurse says it's safe to do so.

For more information about recovery after surgery for breast cancer, see our booklet **Your operation and recovery**. To order or download a copy visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)

Breast Cancer Care is here for anyone affected by breast cancer. We bring people together, provide information and support, and campaign for improved standards of care. We use our understanding of people's experience of breast cancer and our clinical expertise in everything we do.

Visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk) or call our free Helpline on 0808 800 6000 (Text Relay 18001).



the breast cancer  
support charity

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This leaflet has been produced by Breast Cancer Care's clinical specialists and reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer. If you would like a list of the sources we used to research this publication, email [publications@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:publications@breastcancercare.org.uk) or call 0845 092 0808.

#### Centres

London and the South East of England  
Telephone 0845 077 1895  
Email [src@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:src@breastcancercare.org.uk)

East Midlands and the North of England  
Telephone 0845 077 1893  
Email [nrc@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:nrc@breastcancercare.org.uk)

Wales, South West and Central England  
Telephone 0845 077 1894  
Email [cym@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:cym@breastcancercare.org.uk)

Scotland and Northern Ireland  
Telephone 0845 077 1892  
Email [sco@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:sco@breastcancercare.org.uk)

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#### Central Office

Breast Cancer Care  
5–13 Great Suffolk Street  
London SE1 0NS  
Telephone 0845 092 0800  
Fax 0845 092 0820  
Email [info@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:info@breastcancercare.org.uk)



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