

AVOID during the FIRST 2 WEEKS AFTER BREAST SURGERY

Cancer Research UK and Dana Farber

Your surgeon may suggest slightly different timings, so check if you are unsure.

- Don't lift your arm above the height of your shoulder or stretch behind your back.
- Don't lift anything heavier than a bag of sugar.

You might not realize that some everyday things can strain your muscles. Avoid doing any of the following with your arm on the side of your surgery. Avoiding these things helps your muscles to slowly stretch and heal.

- Pushing yourself up off the bed
- Pushing doors open
- Pulling things towards you, such as pulling washing out of the washing machine

IMPLANT

The implant has been placed under the muscle at the front of your chest. It stretches the chest muscle more than usual. By avoiding the movements listed above, the implant won't move and you won't overstretch the muscle or the wound. So it can all heal and settle down.

- When you are fastening your bra, do it up at the front, swivel it round, and put your arm on the side you had surgery in first. When you put your coat on, make sure you put the side you had surgery in the armhole first.

(Cancer Research UK)

If you have a lumpectomy or partial mastectomy with or without a sentinel lymph node biopsy:

- Avoid any activity that bounces or jostles the breast for two weeks after surgery (i.e.: running, jumping, using the elliptical machine).
- Perform shoulder range of motion as tolerated, beginning 1-2 days after surgery.
- If you have an axillary node dissection: You may want to use pillows to elevate your arm at night to decrease swelling during the first week. Putting a pillow between your arm and your side at night will prevent you from rolling on to the surgical site.
- You should avoid repetitive motions with the arm on the surgical side, such as vacuuming, for two weeks after surgery.
- Avoid heavy lifting for 4 weeks.

If you have a mastectomy without reconstruction:

- Perform shoulder range of motion as tolerated, even while the drains are in.
- You may return to low-impact exercises after surgery once your pain is controlled and you feel comfortable.

If you have breast reconstruction:

- You should not lift your arm above shoulder level until cleared by your plastic surgeon.
- You may return to low-impact exercises four weeks after surgery.

Walking is a great exercise to begin immediately to reduce bone loss, counter fatigue and nausea, and prevent muscle atrophy. After surgery, try to walk around for a few minutes 2-3 times per day.

If you've had a mastectomy do not lift your arm past shoulder level while the drains are in.

(Dana Farber)