

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **POST BREAST SURGERY MANAGEMENT**



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Introduction

Axillary web syndrome (or lymphatic cording) is a possible side effect of the breast cancer surgery.

It refers to formation of cord-like structures mainly in the armpit area but they may extend into arm or forearm. Cording typically occurs anywhere from several days to several weeks post-surgery. Although we are not yet certain what exactly causes cording, it is considered to be a result of scarring in the tissue as it heals from the surgery.



What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

Impact of Cording on Everyday Activities

Axillary cords can be clearly visible under the skin or you may only feel it as pain or tightness upon certain movement requiring raising your arm above shoulder level or reaching overhead. If you have severe axillary cording, you can experience pain and restriction of movement, making it difficult to use the arm in day to day activities.

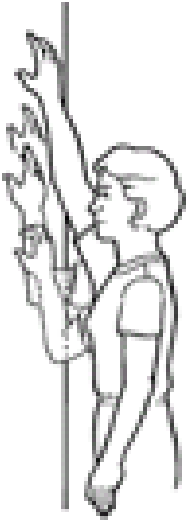
Strategies to Manage Axillary Web Syndrome

If you have cording or experience tightness and/or pain in the shoulder area seek help from your therapist at the soonest to prevent further reduction in mobility and complications. With manual therapy and regular exercises, axillary cording can be managed. You can approach your therapist for further guidance.

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Stretching Exercises

☐ Wall Flexion

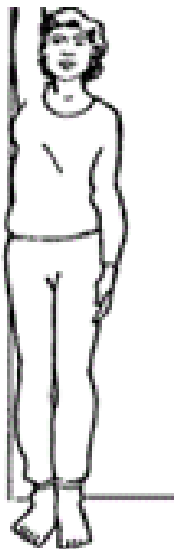


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Stand near a wall as shown. Slowly "walk" your fingers up the wall, until you feel a stretch in the front of your armpit.

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☐ Wall Abduction



Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Stand near a wall as shown. Slowly "walk" your fingers up the wall, so that you feel a stretch in the front of your armpit.

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Stretching Exercises

☐ Pectoralis Corner Stretch

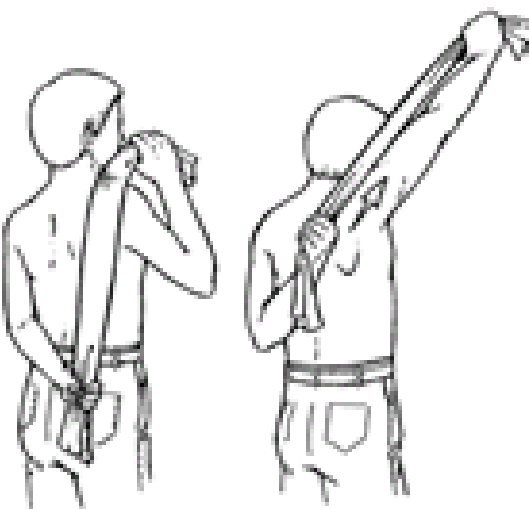


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Stand in a corner about 1-2 feet from wall with hands on wall as shown. Lean into corner so that you feel a stretch at the front of your shoulder. Vary the stretch by moving arms higher or lower, or by standing farther away from wall.

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☐ Towel Stretch for Shoulder Rotation



Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

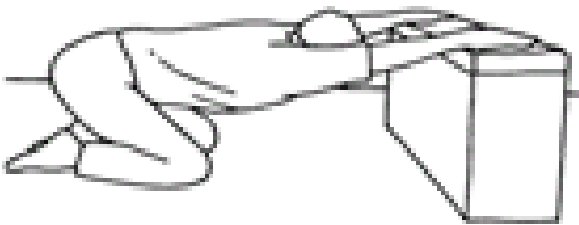
Stand with towel as shown with arm behind your back. Stretch the arm up behind your back by pulling upward on the towel with the other hand for assistance.

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Stretching Exercises

☐ Thoracolumbar Fascia Stretch

Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

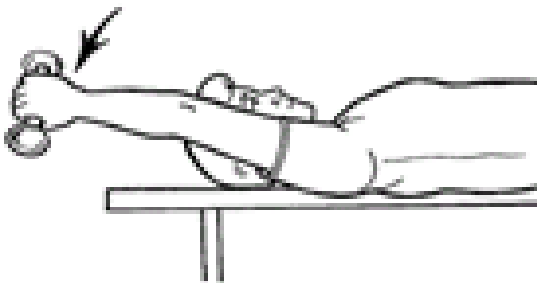


Start by sitting on your heels. Keep your hands directly in front of you either on a bench or on the floor. Tuck your chin into your chest, and slide your hands forward, until you feel a stretch of your neck and back muscles.

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☐ Shoulder Flexion Stretch (Gravity Assisted)

Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

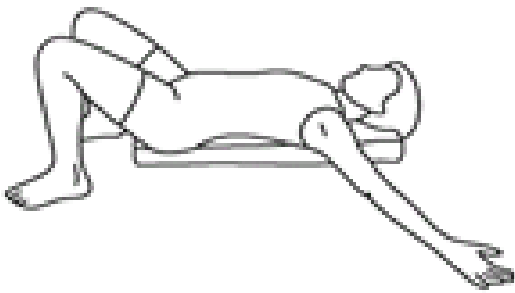
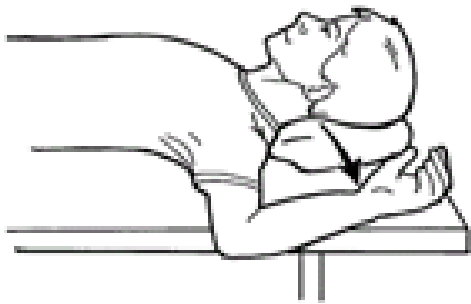


Lie on back with a small weight in your hand. Stretch the arm overhead as shown. Let the weight of your arm stretch the shoulder and armpit.

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Stretching Exercises

☐ Anterior Chest Wall Stretch

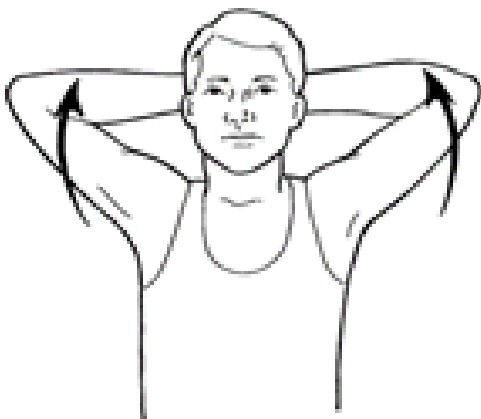


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Lie on back with arm out to side as shown. Let the weight of your arm stretch the front of your chest and shoulders. You may choose to increase the intensity of the stretch by placing a towel roll under the spine and varying the arm positions as shown.

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☐ Pectoralis Wing Stretch



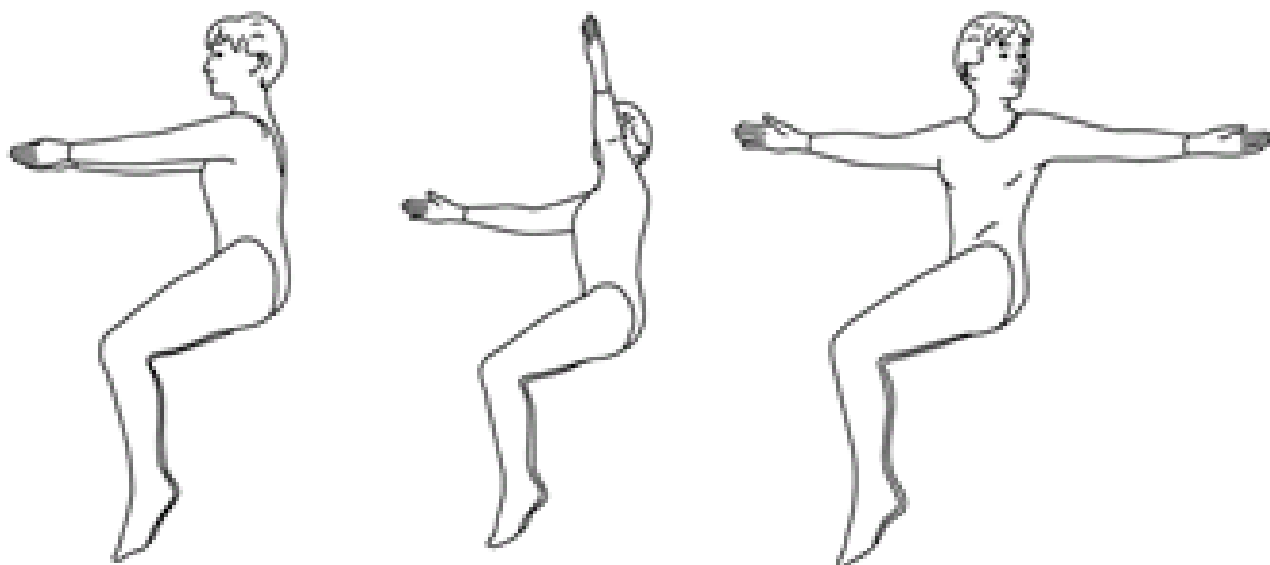
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Place your hands behind your neck. Move your elbows out to the side. Feel the stretch at the front of the shoulder and armpit.

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Stretching Exercises

☐ Open Book Stretch



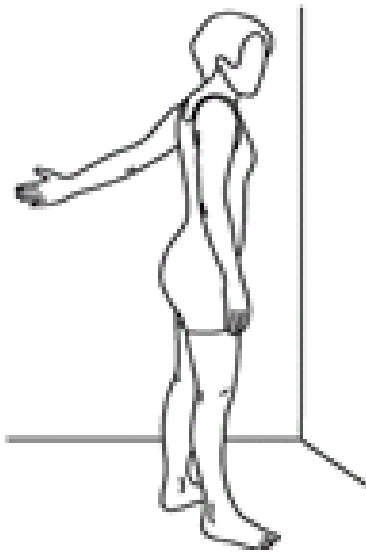
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Lie on your side with legs bent, arms resting on the floor/ bed in front of the body slightly below shoulder height, palms facing each other. Turn your upper body and shoulder as a unit slowly to opposite side keeping the lower body still. Continue turning the body and arm until the arm rests on the floor or as far back as you can.

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Stretching Exercises

☐ Wall Stretch Shoulder Extension



Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Put your hip and the front of the shoulder and entire arm against a wall. Keep your arm straight and palm touching the wall and turn your chest away from the wall. Feel the stretch in the shoulder. You can vary the position of the arm on the wall as tolerated.

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☐ Side Bending Stretch



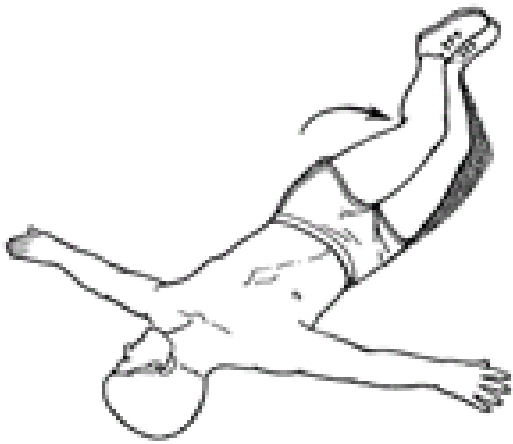
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Bend your trunk to one side until you feel a stretch, with arm overhead as shown.

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Stretching Exercises

☐ Trunk Rotation

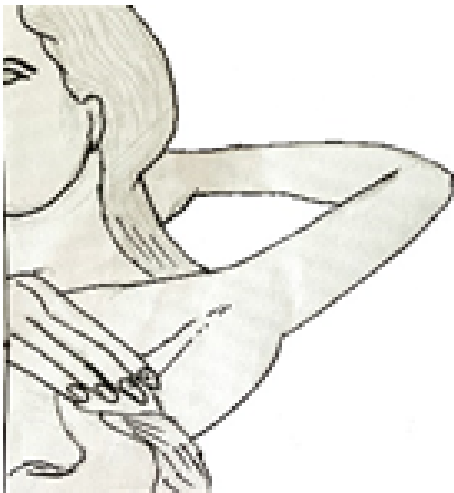


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet together, arms out to the side. Rotate knees from one side to the other side.

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☐ Axillary Cord Stretching



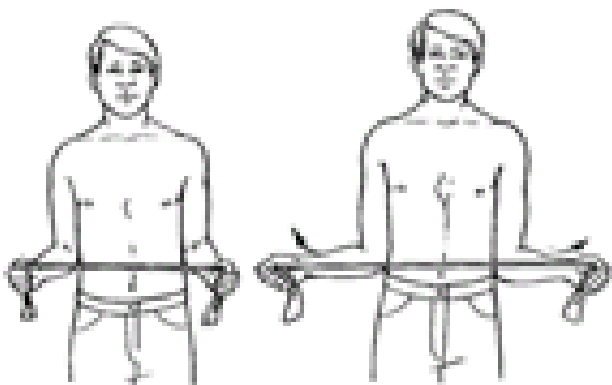
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Place your hand behind the head as shown. Stretch the skin over your armpit downwards to anchor it with the other hand as show. Move your elbow forward and backwards rhythmically.

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Strengthening Exercises

☐ Shoulder External Rotators Strengthening (Type 1)

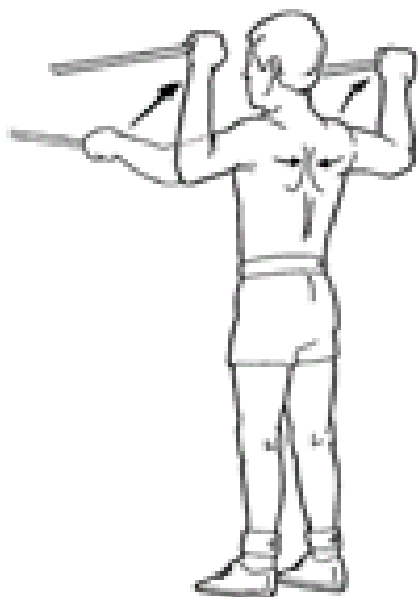


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Sit or stand holding resistance band as shown. While keeping elbows bent and locked against your sides pinch your shoulder blades together as you pull the band outward.

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☐ Shoulder External Rotators Strengthening (Type 2)



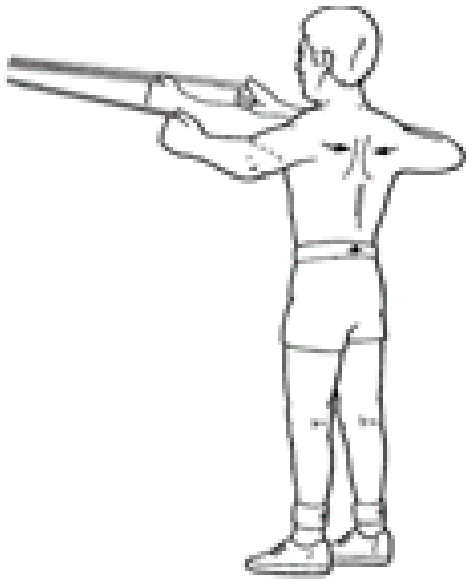
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Anchor resistance band to a solid object. Stand holding band in both hands with elbows bent at 90 degrees and level with shoulders. Rotate the shoulder upwards as shown. Squeeze shoulder blades together while doing so.

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Strengthening Exercises

☐ Rhomboids Strengthening

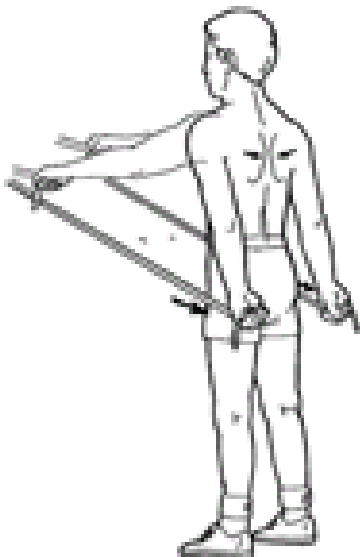


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Anchor resistance band to a solid object. Stand holding band in both hands with arms in front of body. Pull the band backwards and keeping the shoulders up and elbows level with shoulder. Squeeze shoulder blades backwards while doing so.

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☐ Lower Trapezius Strengthening



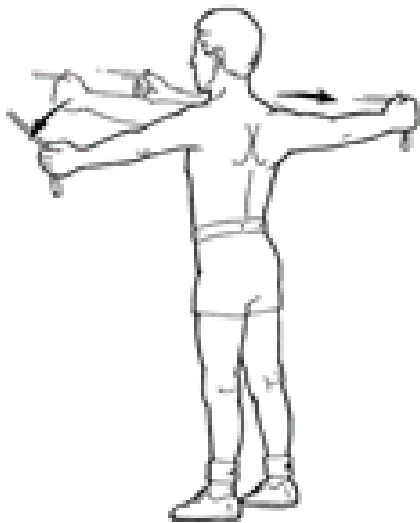
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Anchor resistance band to a solid object. Stand holding band in both hands with arms in front of body. Pull the band backwards and downwards. Squeeze shoulder blades backwards while doing so.

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Strengthening Exercises

☐ Upper Back Strengthening

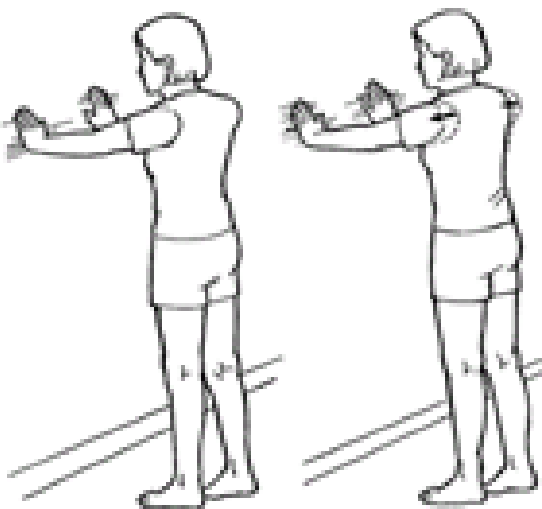


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Anchor resistance band to a solid object. Stand holding band in both hands with arms in front of body. Pull the band backwards while opening the arms. Squeeze shoulder blades backwards while doing so.

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☐ Wall Press (Serratus Strengthening)



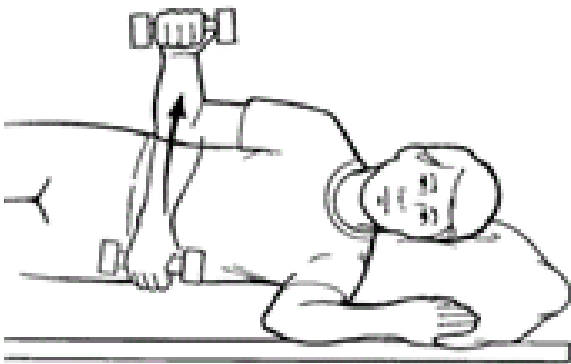
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Stand with hands against wall as shown. Press shoulders forward as you press spine backward.

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Strengthening Exercises

☐ Shoulder External Rotation Strengthening with Dumbbell

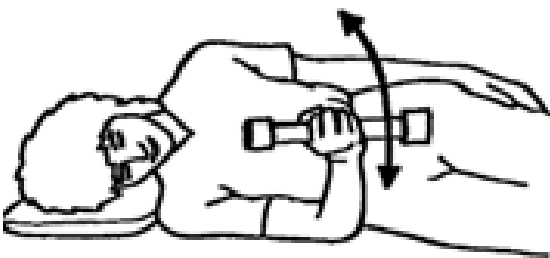


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Hold a _____ weight in your L/R hand. Lie on side so that arm holding weight is on top. Rotate arm upward, keeping elbow bent as shown.

.....

☐ Shoulder Internal Rotator Strengthening with Dumbbell (Type 1)



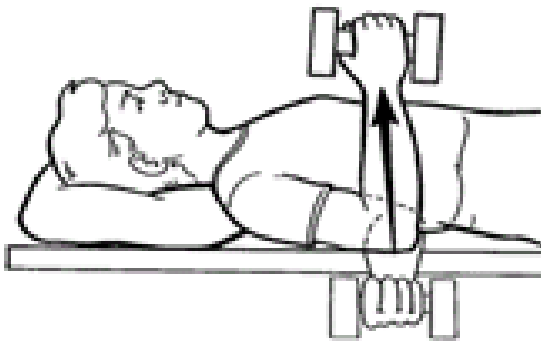
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Stand with hands against wall as shown. Press shoulders forward as you press spine backward.

What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

Strengthening Exercises

☐ **Shoulder Internal Rotator Strengthening with Dumbbell (Type 2)**

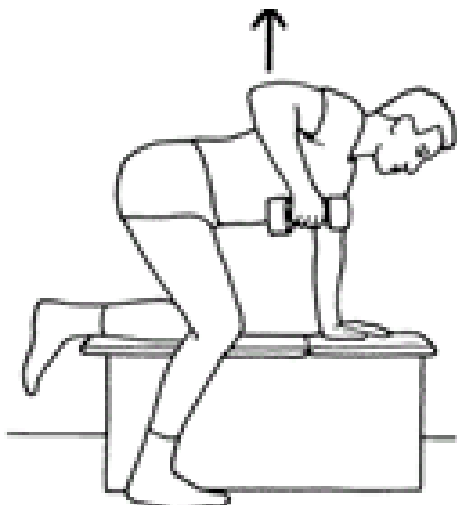


Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Hold a _____ weight in your L/R hand. Lie on back with elbow bent, forearm parallel with floor. Rotate arm in toward body, keeping elbow bent as shown.

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☐ **Bent Over Row**



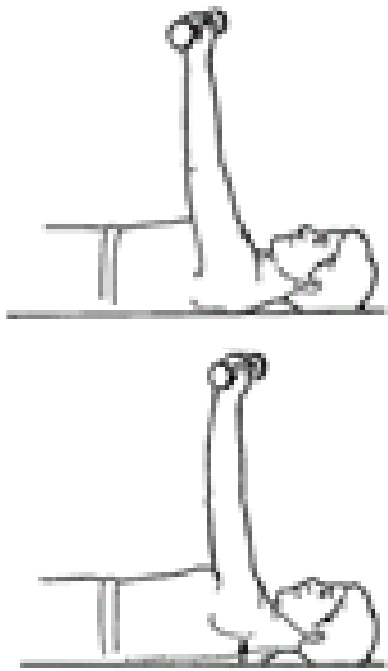
Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Start with one arm and one leg kneeling on a bench or in a supported lunge position to support the upper body. Your other arm is extended straight down and holding a dumbbell. Pull it up to your armpit by bending and moving your elbow up.

What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

Strengthening Exercises

☐ Serratus Anterior Strengthening with Dumbbell



Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Hold _____ weight in hand. Lie on back with arm pointed upward as shown. Raise shoulder off bed as you push fist toward ceiling.

.....

☐ Elbow Prop

Repeat as per therapist's instructions.



Lie on your stomach. Prop your upper trunk on your elbows as shown. Round your upper back while pushing weight through the shoulders.

What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

Breathing Exercises

☐ Lateral Thoracic Expansion in Sitting



Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Sit comfortably. Place hand on chest wall of the operated side. Breathe in slowly through your nose, expanding and feeling the movement under your hand.

.....

☐ Diaphragmatic Breathing in Sitting



Repeat as per therapist's instructions.

Sit comfortably. Place your hand on your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose. You should feel your abdomen rise under your hand rise as you breathe in.

What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

Scar Management



A scar is formed as the body heals from the surgical incision or an injury. After an injury, your body lays down collagen near the injured tissue in a random fashion, and this leads to scar tissue formation. Normal healthy collagen is aligned in specific ways and directions that give your tissue strength.

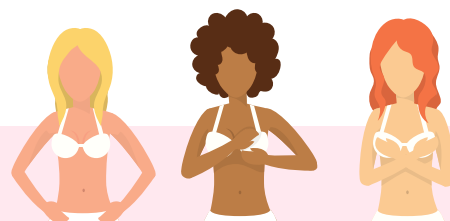
Importance of Scar Massage



The scar needs to lay down properly to ensure that it is soft and pliable allowing normal range of motion, strength and mobility to be restored to the injured tissue. Failure to do so can lead to formation of a heavy binding scar that can prevent movement of the skin and joint structures thus affecting the mobility. Performing scar tissue massage can help with this process.

What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

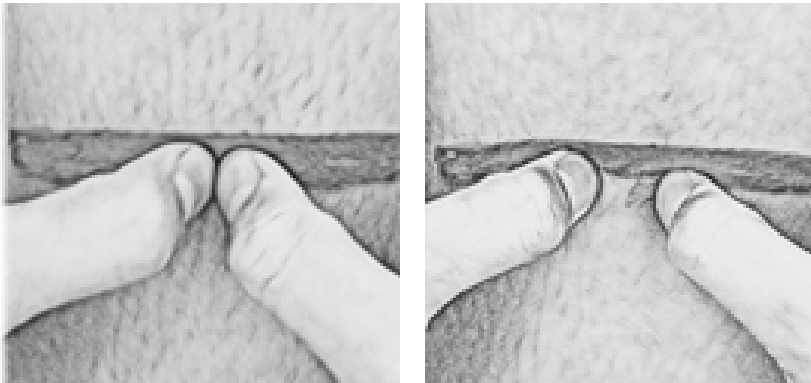
Performing Scar Massage



Ensure that your surgical wound is well healed before you start any scar massage. You can check with your therapist if it's safe to massage your scar. Rub scar with thumb or one or two fingers using circular, up and down and sideways motion with firm, deep pressure. Perform massage slowly, allowing tissues to stretch. Separate skin from tissue below by pinching skin between fingers and thumb. Roll skin between fingers. Rub scar with a massage ball/ massage roller twisting the ball to grip the skin.

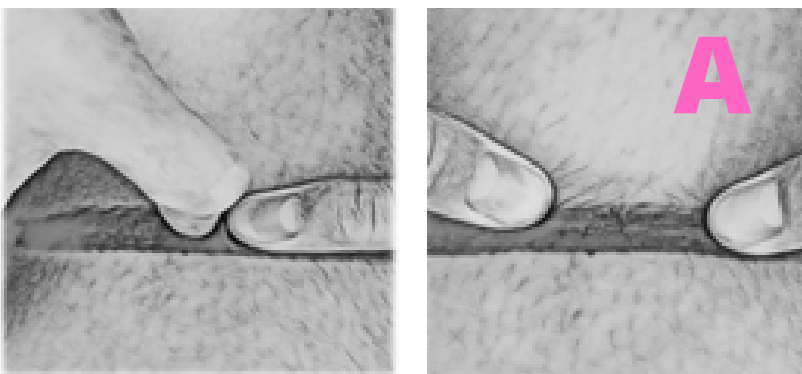
What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

Linear - Following the Scar Line



- Place thumbs in the centre of scar
- Separate by pulling thumbs apart maintaining a downward pressure
- Follow the path you feel more "tight"

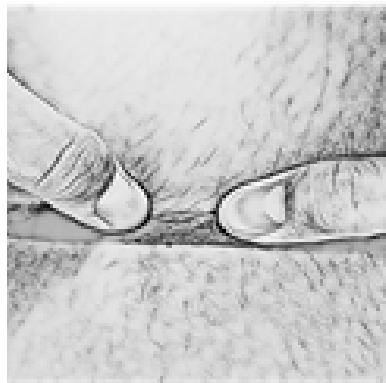
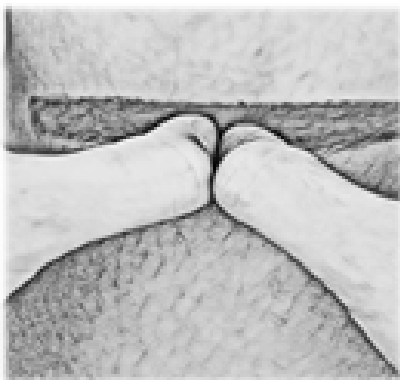
Linear with Anchor - Following the Scar Line



- Start at one end of the scar
- Anchor (A) with one thumb and pull second thumb across scar to opposite end while maintaining a downward pressure
- Follow the path you feel more "tight"

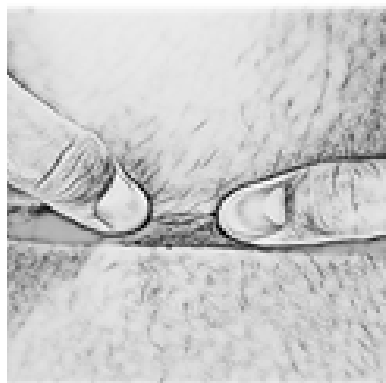
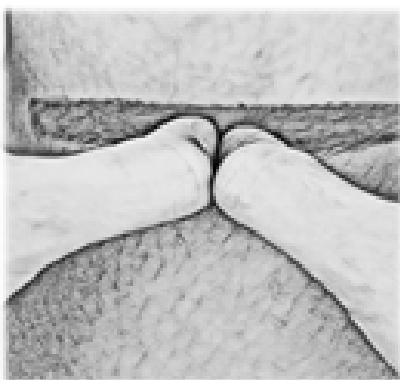
What you should know about Post Breast Surgery Management

Horizontal - Away from the Scar Line



- Place thumbs in the centre of scar
- Separate by pulling thumbs apart maintaining a downward pressure
- Follow the path you feel more "tight"

Diagonal - Away from the Scar Line



- Anchor (A) scar on one side
- Separate opposite side by pulling skin apart on a diagonal angle maintaining a downward pressure

NOTES



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CANCER
SOCIETY**

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