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Self-Directed Home Exercise Program Shoulder Replacement – Physical Therapy Guide

Introduction: Activities progress through stages following shoulder replacement, largely categorized into initial healing and protection (4-6 weeks), followed by full motion recovery (4 weeks to 3 months), followed by strengthening and higher demand use (3 months and beyond). The goal of this guide is to prepare and direct you (and often your physical therapist) on exercises that are the most helpful for each stage of recovery.

Instructions: It is recommended you complete each exercise 2-3 times each day for 10 repetitions per exercise set. Mild soreness during an exercise is okay, however pain that lingers or persists into the night means you are pushing too hard. Heat prior to a workout and ice after a workout is typically a reliable pain-relieving strategy, with use of medications as directed.

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1. **Immediate Postop to 4-6 Weeks:** goals are avoidance of “extremes” of shoulder motion, limit placing the hand behind the back, gradually increasing passive motion of the shoulder, restore full active motion of the elbow/wrist/hand.

Protections: Do not reach or lift the arm away from your body and avoid sudden movements. Do not support your body weight by hand on the surgical side and limit lifting to the weight of a cup of coffee. Keep the incision clean and dry for 5 days followed by routine showering.



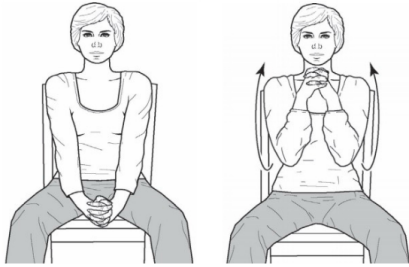
Sleeping Position: While lying flat or sitting up in a recliner, the elbow should be supported by a rolled towel or a pillow (pictured) to keep it at the side.



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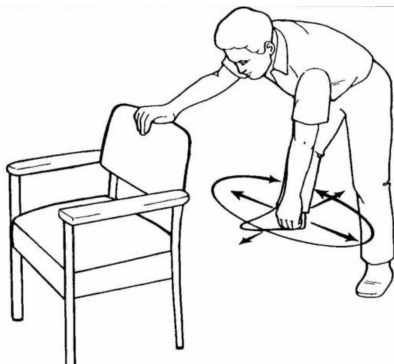
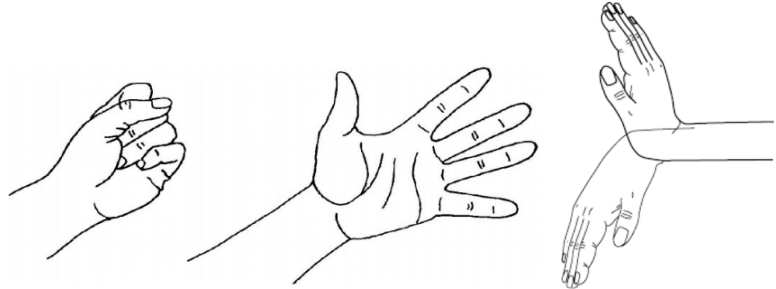


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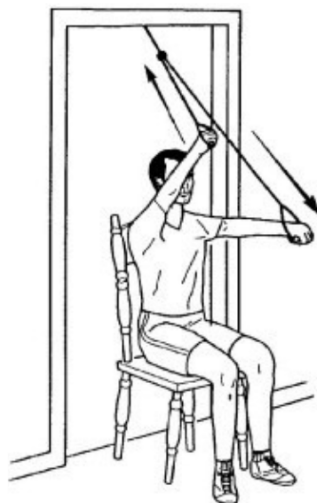
Passive Elbow Range of Motion: While sitting in a chair, use your good arm to help bend the elbow of your surgical arm up and down.

Active Wrist and Finger Range of Motion: Bend your fingers and straighten them back out, bend your hand up and down.



Pendulums: Lean forward while supporting your body weight with your good arm. Let gravity gently pull the surgical arm away from your body. Create side to side or circular motions. Perform several repetitions and relax the arm back to your body. Replace the sling.

2. **Postop Weeks 3 to 6:** Exercises above can be continued and progressed. This phase focuses on increasing passive range of motion, where there is assistance with movement of your shoulder. Once you have discontinued your sling (between 4 and 6 weeks), these exercises typically become easier and you can begin to push the motion to feel a slight stretch.



Rope & Pulley: These are available through your physical therapist, online, or can be fabricated at home.

Pull downward with your good arm, which will raise your surgical arm gently. First you can work on getting the surgical arm away from your body and eventually progressing to overhead.

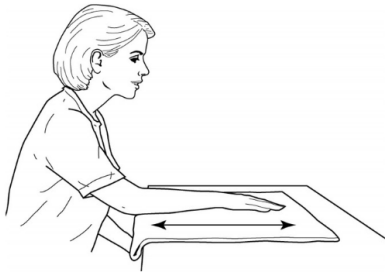
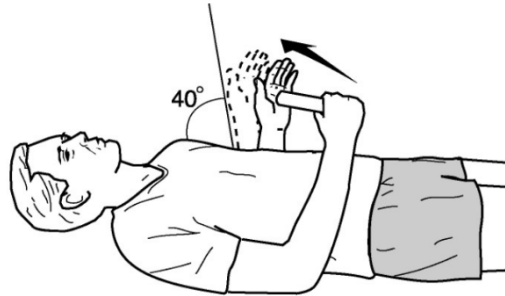


Table Slides: Rest your arm on a table in a comfortable position. Gently slide your arm in front of you as if you are reaching for an item on the table. Hold for 15 seconds and slide your arm back to the starting position.

Stick Exercises: Lie on your back or from a sitting position, hold a broom handle or golf club, keeping your elbow bent and close to your side. Use your good arm to push your other hand out to the side with the rod/club, feeling a stretch in your shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds at a time.



3. **Postop Weeks 6 to 12.** By now the sling is off and you can use your arm for full routine daily activities including for reaching and for moving the arm away from your body. Lifting is still limited to a full plate of food or a coffee container. Continue to progress your range of motion and you can continue the exercises in the previous phase. Avoid supporting your body weight with the surgical arm, especially when pushing yourself out of bed or out of a chair.



Wall Walks: With your elbow held straight, use your fingers to “crawl” up the wall or door frame as far as possible. Hold for 10-20 seconds each time.



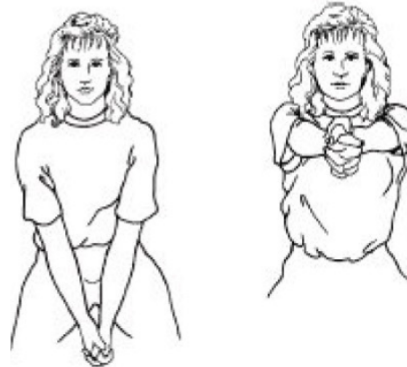
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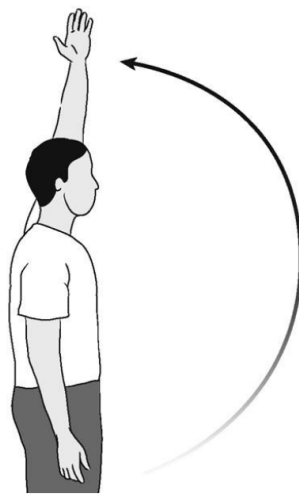
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Shoulder Raises: Sit or lie down and use your good arm to help raise your surgical shoulder arm up above your head. Hold, then slowly bring the arm back to your side. Work on gradually increasing the stretch to and over your head. Elbows straight.

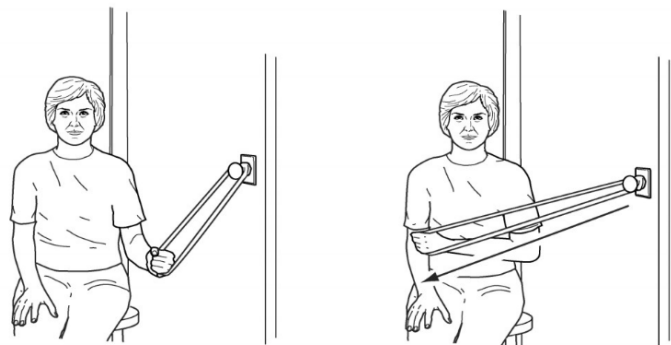


4. **Strengthening, Weeks 8 to 12+.** Once you have recovered a reliable range of motion for most of your daily activities, you can initiate strengthening and more ambitious stretches. The exercises in the prior phase should be continued, usually until 12 weeks after surgery. Moderate shoulder strengthening at home can be continued for several months a couple times a week. Focus on reps and form and not necessarily weights. Weights should not exceed 10-15 pounds during this phase.



Forward Elevation Stretches: Raise your arm upward to point to the ceiling, keeping your elbow straight and leading with your thumb, as shown. Hold for 10 seconds. Avoid hiking your shoulder blade. It is helpful to watch yourself doing this in front of the mirror to prevent shoulder blade engagement and hiking.

Shoulder Internal Rotation: Attach a theraband or similar band at waist height, either sitting or standing. Pull the band out across your body, keeping your elbow at your side and hold. Slowly return to the starting position. This same exercise can be repeated for external rotation, where the elbow is kept at the side and the hand is moved away from you.



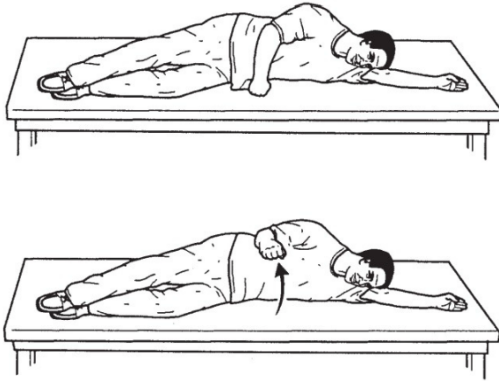


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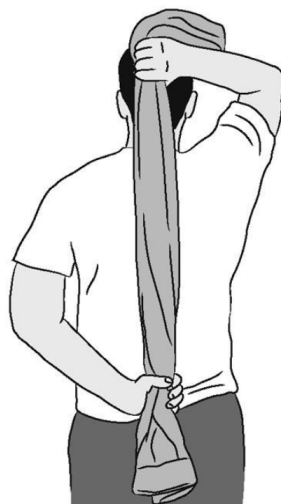
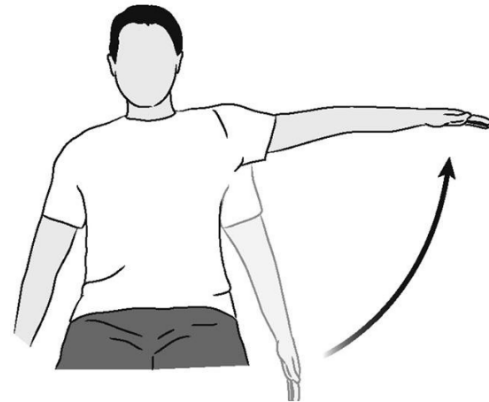
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Gravity External Rotation: Start with your upper arm at your side with the elbow bent 90 degrees, and with the upper arm fixed at your side, raise your hand up to shoulder level. Hold, then slowly lower to starting point.

Shoulder Abduction: Raise your arm out to your side, with your elbow straight and palm downward. Do not shrug your shoulder or tilt your trunk.



Internal Rotation Stretches: Use your other hand or a towel to help bring your involved hand behind your back and across to the opposite side, hold.