

Upper Body Exercises

Building strength and range of motion after surgery

This handout describes 4 arm exercises to increase strength and range of motion while you are recovering after heart surgery.

Exercising with Sternal Precautions

You will need to protect your *sternum* (breastbone) after surgery. But, it is also important to do exercises to increase your arm strength and range of motion during this time.

Doing the exercises in this handout will help you learn how to safely move your arms. As you do the exercises and get stronger, it will also be easier to do your other daily activities.

Your occupational therapist (OT) will write numbers in the blanks in the exercises below. Your OT may also change this exercise program as needed to best fit your care.

For each exercise:

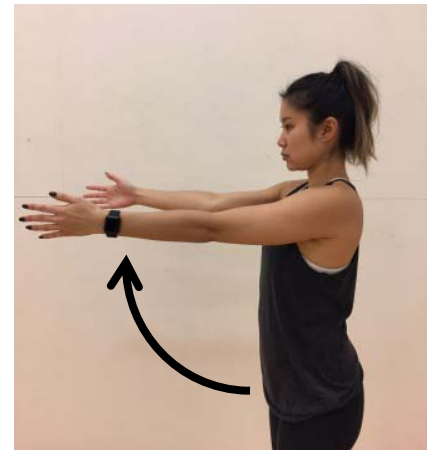
- Repeat 10 times. This is 1 set.
- Do 1 set of each exercise at least _____ times every day.

Exercise #1

Elbow Flexion

“Airplane Director”

1. Keeping your arms straight, lift your hands in front of you. Stop when your hands are at shoulder height (at a 90° angle from your body).
2. Bend your arms and touch your hands to the top of your head. Hold for a count of _____.
3. Relax your arms back down to your sides.
4. Repeat.



Exercise #1

Exercise #2

Shoulder Abduction

“Chicken Wings”

1. With your elbows bent, hold your arms at your sides.
2. Lift your elbows out to the side and up. Stop when your elbows are level with your shoulders. Hold for a count of ____.
3. Relax your arms back down to your sides.
4. Repeat.



Exercise #2

Exercise #3

Internal Rotation

“Superman”

1. Stand with your arms by your sides. Draw your thumbs up your sides. Stop when your hands are by your waist and your thumbs are pointing behind you.
2. Roll your shoulders forward so your elbows point in front of you. Hold for a count of _____. Then relax your shoulders.
3. Relax your arms back down to your sides.
4. Repeat.



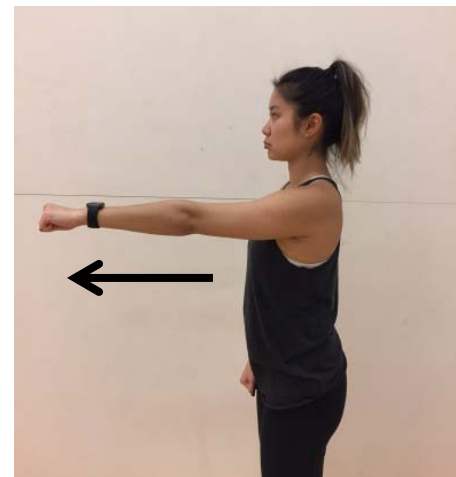
Exercise #3

Exercise #4

Shoulder Flexion

“Forward Punches”

1. Hold both arms by your sides. Make a fist with each hand.
2. Thrust one arm out in front of you until your elbow is straight and your arm is at shoulder height. Hold for a count of ____.
3. Relax your arms back down to your sides.
4. Repeat.



Exercise #4

Questions?

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