

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.

Clamshell Precautions

You will need to protect your *sternum* (breastbone) and skin incision after surgery. It is also important to do exercises to increase your arm strength and range of motion after surgery.

Doing these exercises will help you learn how to safely move your arms. As you exercise and get stronger, it will also get easier to do your other daily activities.

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

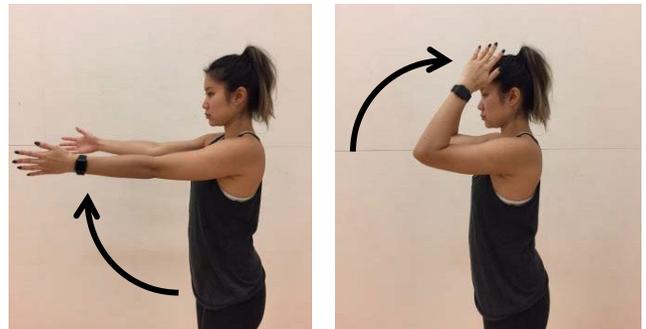
For each exercise:

- 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 #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.



Scan for a digital copy of this handout.

Exercise #3

Internal Rotation - “Superman”

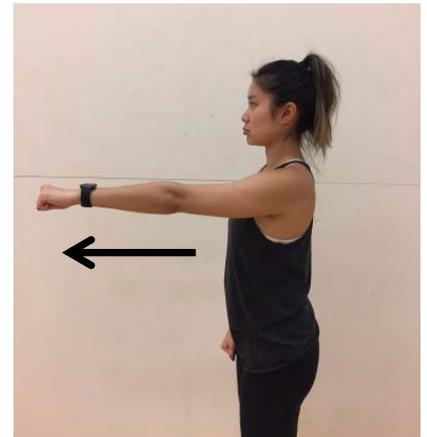
5. Stand with your arms by your sides. Draw your thumbs up your sides. Stop when your hands are by your waist and your thumbs are pointing behind you.
6. Roll your shoulders forward so your elbows point in front of you. Hold for a count of _____.
7. Then relax your shoulders.
8. Relax your arms back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



Exercise #4

Shoulder Flexion - “Forward Punches”

10. Hold both arms by your sides. Make a fist with each hand.
11. 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 _____.
12. Relax your arms back down to your sides.
13. Repeat.



Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.