



After Breast Reconstruction

Self-care to speed your recovery

This handout explains how to change your activities while you are recovering from breast reconstruction surgery.

Activity

- For 4 weeks after surgery, do not lift, push, or pull anything that weighs more than 5 pounds.
- For 3 weeks after surgery, avoid moving your shoulder a lot on the side(s) of your surgery:
 - Do **not** raise your elbow(s) higher than your shoulder. This includes in front of you and out to the side.
 - Do **not** reach to the side, behind your back, or behind your head.
- At first, you will need to walk slightly bent over. As you are able, slowly begin to stand and walk more upright.
- If you cannot lie flat in bed, use pillows or a foam wedge to prop yourself up.
- When you are able to lie flat, bend your knees for greater comfort. You may want put a pillow under your knees.
- Avoid bending over at your hips so that your chest does not hang down.
- Do not lie on your stomach for 6 weeks. It is OK to lie on your side.
- Slowly increase your activity. Walk for exercise. Do not do more vigorous exercise until your doctor tells you it is OK.

Daily Living

- Do not wear a regular bra right after surgery. A surgical camisole, regular camisole, or a tank top for chest support is OK. Ask your doctor when it is OK for you to start wearing a bra again.
- Do not wear an underwire bra until your incisions are healed. This will take about 6 weeks.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

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- To put on your shoes and socks:
 - Bring your foot up to you by crossing your ankle over your opposite knee.
 - If needed, you may bend over to put on your shoes and socks, but avoid staying in a bent position for long. Your occupational therapist may advise that you use a reacher, sock aid, or shoehorn to help you get dressed.
- To shower, tie a piece of wide ribbon around your neck and attach your drains to it. The drains should hang on the ribbon, not from your drain sites.
- Avoid taking baths, sitting in a hot tub, or swimming until your incisions are completely healed.
- Remember that it is easier to stand up from higher seats. Put a pillow on a chair and other low surfaces before you sit down so that it will be easier to stand up. A raised toilet seat will also help.

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