

Advice following shoulder surgery

The following guidelines will help you to know how much to do with your arm following your surgery.

Lifting and housework

For the first six weeks after your operation, only lift light objects with your affected arm as long as it is comfortable to do so (for example, a kettle). It is advisable to use your **unaffected** arm for heavy or repetitive tasks such as window cleaning, ironing or vacuum cleaning.

After six weeks your operation scar should be well healed, and you can **gradually** increase the amount you are doing with your affected arm. You may feel an aching around your shoulder after certain activities, but this should subside as the muscles become stronger. Depending on which muscles the operation has involved, you may find particular activities such as reaching above your head more difficult. If this is the case, your physiotherapist can advise you on specific exercises you may need to do to maximise your function.

Driving

You should not drive until after your first outpatient clinic appointment following your operation. All drains should be removed and you should have regained sufficient movement and strength in your arm to be able to drive comfortably. However, do not start driving until **you** feel confident that you are safe and able to react in an emergency. When you do start, go on short trips at first and gradually increase the distance as you feel able. It is wise to check your insurance policy following any surgery.

Sport and leisure

- Regular exercise can improve your self-esteem and sense of wellbeing after surgery
- There is evidence to support the benefits of exercise following a cancer diagnosis
- Walking is a safe form of exercise to do once you return home after your operation
- It is usual to feel quite tired following an anaesthetic so you may need to reduce the amount you normally do in the short term.

If you have good shoulder movement and your operation scar has healed (usually six to eight weeks after your operation), you may begin swimming. If you are having radiotherapy, you should not swim until after your radiotherapy has finished and your skin has healed. We suggest you check with your radiographer or physiotherapist before returning to the pool. Bear in mind that depending on the type of operation you have had, you may find certain movements or activities more difficult. Ask your physiotherapist if you have particular questions about return to sport.



Returning to work

When you return to work will depend on what your job involves. Your doctor or physiotherapist can discuss your work with you and give more specific advice.

Specific instructions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Contact details

If you have any questions, please contact your physiotherapist:

Sarcoma/Melanoma physiotherapist

Chelsea: 020 7808 2821

Sutton: 020 8661 3098

Outside of normal working hours, please contact:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

(Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Sources of information and support

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)

CSP provides information on NHS and private physiotherapists with a special interest in cancer care and in women's health. They also produce public information leaflets.

Website: www.csp.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan provides free information and emotional support for people living with cancer and can signpost to local cancer support groups and organisations near you.

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Macmillan Support Line: 0808 808 00 00 (7 days a week, 8am–8pm)

Sarcoma UK

Sarcoma UK is the main charity in the UK dealing with all types of sarcomas. They have a wide range of information on sarcoma and can offer support to those with sarcoma.

Sarcoma UK Support Line: 0808 801 0401 (Monday to Friday, 10am–3pm)

Website: www.sarcoma.org.uk

Email: supportline@sarcoma.org.uk

