The James
The Ohio State University
Comprehensive Cancer Center

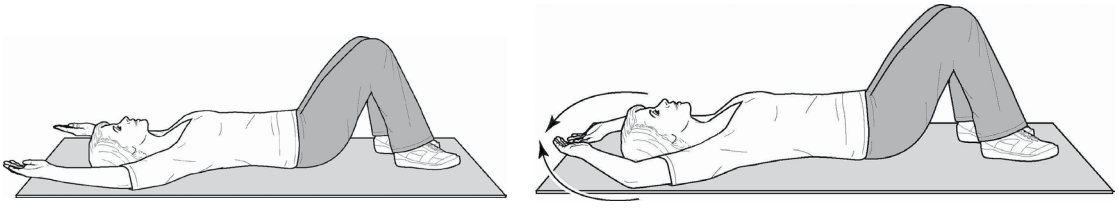
Shoulder Exercises after a Neck Dissection - Advanced Program

Your spinal accessory nerve may be affected or removed during your neck dissection. This nerve controls your shoulder muscles that lift your arms out to the side of your body. After your surgery, your shoulder muscles may be weak and you may have problems getting dressed or be unable to lift things over your head.

Your physical therapist will teach you exercises that you can do at home to keep your arms strong and working well. It is important to do these exercises at a slow pace. Talk to your physical therapist if you have any questions about these exercises.

Snow Angel

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat. It may help to roll a towel under your neck for support.
- Straighten your arms at your side with the palms of your hands facing up.
- Slowly slide your arms out to the side and up over your head. Only move your arms as far as you are comfortable.
- Hold for 3 seconds and then relax.
- Slowly return to starting position.
- Do this exercise _____ times, _____ times each day.



This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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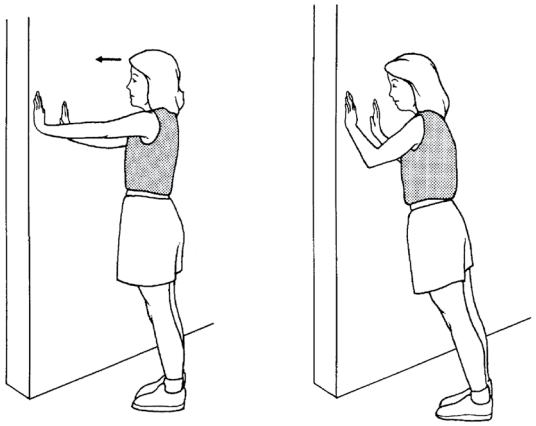
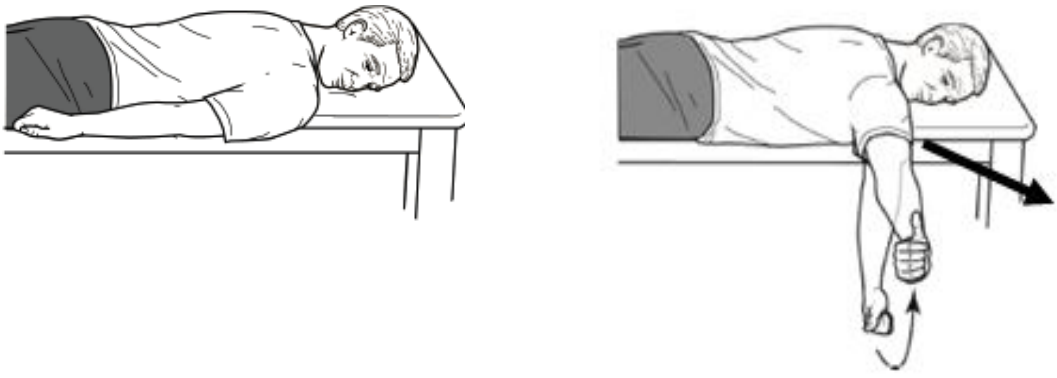
Wall Push-Ups

- Stand facing the wall at arm's length. Put your hands against the wall at shoulder level.
- Slowly bend your elbows to move in toward the wall. Keep your head, abdomen (belly) and legs in a straight line.
- Slowly return to starting position.
- Do this exercise _____ times, _____ times each day.



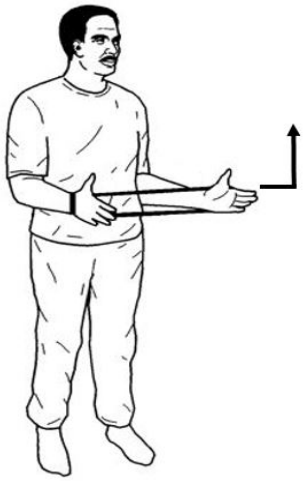
Prone I, T, Y

- Lie on your stomach, with your arm on the side you had surgery hanging off your bed or therapy table.
- I: Slowly move your arm straight back, close to your side.
- T: Slowly move your arm out to the side, with your palm facing down.
- Y: Slowly move your arm up, overhead at a slight angel with your thumb up toward the ceiling.
- Slowly return to starting position.
- Do this exercise _____ times, _____ times each day.



Shoulder Flexion/Extension with Theraband

- Loop the theraband around both wrists. Keep your arms shoulder-width apart.
- Pull your arms apart just so you feel tension on the theraband.
- Keep your elbows bent. Raise your shoulders until your upper arms are parallel to the floor. Slowly move your arms up to the level of your forehead.
- Slowly return to starting position.
- Do this exercise _____ times, _____ times each day.



Protraction/Retraction with Theraband

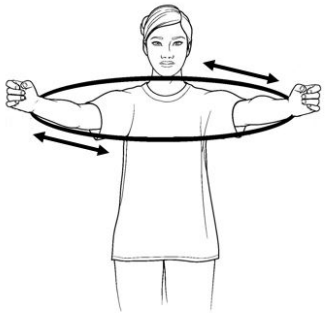
- Loop the theraband around both wrists. Keep your arms shoulder-width apart.
- Pull your arms apart just so you feel tension on the theraband.
- Bend your elbows and slowly pull your shoulder blades back.
- Slowly return to starting position.
- Do this exercise _____ times, _____ times each day.





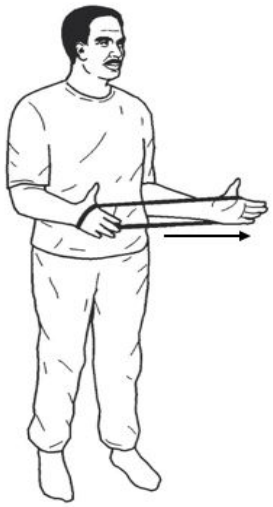
Circles with Theraband

- Loop the theraband around both wrists. Keep your arms shoulder-width apart.
- Pull your arms apart just so you feel tension on the theraband.
- Keep your elbows straight and your arms out in front of you. Keep the tension on the theraband and slowly move your arms clockwise. Do 10 circles.
- Reverse your movement and slowly move your arms counter clockwise. Do 10 circles.
- Do this exercise _____ times each day.



External Rotation with Theraband

- Grab the theraband in both hands.
- Bend your elbows and keep your arms close to your side.
- Slowly pull your arm on the side that had surgery away from your other arm.
- Slowly return to starting position
- Do this exercise _____ times, _____ times each day.



Clock with Theraband

- Loop the theraband around both wrists. Keep your arms shoulder-width apart.
- Place your hands on a wall with your elbows out straight.
- Slowly move your hand on the side that you had surgery to different positions on the wall – right 1 o'clock, 3 o'clock and 5 o'clock; left 11 o'clock, 9 o'clock, 7 o'clock.
- Slowly return to starting position.
- Do this exercise _____ times, _____ times each day.

