

Information about ...

Exercises after burns to your shoulder or arm

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Following a burn injury to your shoulder, you may experience pain and swelling to your arm. This is normal but it may cause problems with work and every day activities, such as eating and dressing. This leaflet will give you advice on appropriate exercises following your injury.

It is important to exercise your joints after a burn injury to prevent stiffness and resultant loss of function (unable to move your shoulder or arm). If there is burn damage to the skin over or near a joint it has the potential to become tight and therefore difficult to move. You could develop a contracture (the muscles tighten up), which causes lack of movement at the joint. This can happen if you do not move the joint. It is always better to prevent a joint contracture developing than it is to treat it.

During your treatment, your physiotherapist will give you exercises to reduce stiffness of your arm and improve your ability to carry out everyday activities.

It is important that you continue these exercises at home.

Pain management

Your doctor may have prescribed pain killers. Make sure that you are taking these regularly. If you were not prescribed any painkillers, take your normal pain killers regularly e.g. paracetamol (do not exceed the daily dose). Your exercises may increase your pain as you are stretching the injured area, so make sure that you take adequate pain relief throughout the day.

Positioning

Your most comfortable position will be where you are not stretching your wound and skin. If you remain in this position, this can lead to longer term problems with restricted movement and being unable to move your arm.

The ideal position whilst your burn is healing is with your arm supported out to the side where your skin is stretched. You can do this using pillows as shown below:



You may need a splint to maintain the arm in a good position. It will either be bandaged or strapped in position. Your physiotherapist will show you how to wear it.

Scar massage

Once your burn has healed, use a plain non-perfumed moisturiser cream 2 to 3 times every day to keep the skin supple. Rub the cream firmly over your scar for approximately 5-10 minutes. This will help with your stretches.

Exercises

Repeat each exercise 10 times every 1-2 hours throughout the day. If you carry them out little and often throughout the day, this will prevent stiffness.

Using your arms for every day activities such as getting dressed and feeding yourself will maintain your movement and reduce stiffness. If you have any hobbies, continue with these if you can.

It is important to do your exercises first thing in the morning as you will find that your arm will be at it's stiffest in the morning. This is because you have not been moving your arm whilst you are sleeping.

The first few exercises may be painful. This is normal and will not cause you any harm. Carry on with the exercises as they will get easier.

Exercise 1

Start with your arm at your side, lead with your thumb and raise your arm from your side as far as your can towards the ceiling and then lower back down to your side.

Repeat this

_____ **times.**

To help see how much movement you are aiming to achieve, do this exercise with both arms together.



Exercise 2

Start with your arm at your side and stretch your arm out in front of you and up towards the ceiling and then lower it.

Repeat this

_____ **times.**

To see how much movement you are aiming to achieve, do this exercise with both arms together.



Exercise 3

Take your arm out and reach behind your head. Slide your hand down to the base of your neck as far as you are able.

Repeat this

_____ times.



Exercise 4

Take your hand behind your back and slide it up the centre of your back towards your shoulder blade as far as you can and then relax.

Repeat this

_____ times.



Exercise 5

Start with your arm out straight and bend your elbow up as far as you can to get your hand to touch your shoulder. Hold for approximately 30 seconds to one minute and then lower.

Repeat this

_____ times.



Exercise 6

Stretch your arm out in front of you to straighten your elbow, hold for between 30 seconds to one minute and then relax.

Repeat this

_____ times.



Helping your arm

If your shoulder or elbow is tight, you can use your unaffected arm to do the exercises above. Use your unaffected arm to give an extra push at the end of each exercise and hold the stretch for a count of 10, or longer if you can.

Exercise 7

Stand close to and facing a wall. Start with your hands at shoulder level, then gradually walk your hands up the wall. Slide your hands slowly back to shoulder level before repeating the exercise.

Repeat this

_____ times.



Or stand close to the wall but this time sideways to it with the affected side nearest the wall. Using the hand nearest the wall, gradually work the hand up the wall as far as you can.

Repeat this

_____ times.

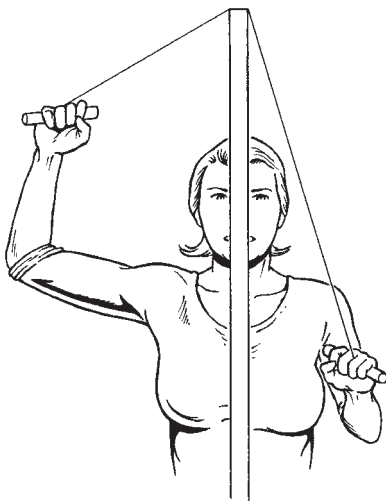


Exercise 8

Place a rope over the top of an open door. Sitting with the door between your legs, or standing, hold the lower end of the rope in the hand on the side of your injury and the higher end of the rope in the other hand. Gently pull on the high end of the rope allowing the hand on your injured side to go up. As you repeat the exercise, try to raise the affected arm higher each time.

Repeat this

_____ **times.**



After exercising

You will find that now you have completed your exercises, your arm will feel looser. It is important to keep your arm moving between exercise sessions by using it normally or it will stiffen up between exercise sessions.

You can stop doing your exercises when exercising is easy and you are using your arm normally throughout the day.

This leaflet contains general information on exercise.

If you have any questions about the exercises, please speak to a physiotherapist. Or please phone the Plastics Therapy Department on **0141 201 3175**.

If your burn injury makes daily activities difficult or you need further advice, please contact the Occupational Therapist on **0141 201 3175**.