

Complications of Breast Cancer Treatment

Chemo, radiation, and surgery can result in complications that may limit your movement and quality of life. These complications include:

Axillary Web Syndrome: A “rope” or “cord” of thick scar tissue along your underarm can cause poor shoulder mobility and pain.



Shoulder Dysfunction: Breast surgery can lead to decreased shoulder motion and strength.

Chemo-Induced Fatigue: Chemotherapy can cause extreme tiredness and decreased energy.

Lymphedema: Surgery can damage the delicate lymphatic system that lies beneath your skin’s surface. This harms your body’s ability to drain fluid, leading to chronic swelling in the arm.

Talk to a Physical Therapist about life after breast cancer.

A licensed physical therapist has the tools and clinical know-how to provide interventions that prevent and decrease the side-effects of breast cancer treatment.

Direct Access

PTs in the state of Virginia hold Direct Access certification, meaning you can be assessed and treated by a physical therapist without referral.

Physician Referral

Your physician can give you a referral to a physical therapist specializing in breast cancer treatment.

Breast Cancer and Physical Therapy

The Beneficial Role of Physical Therapy after Cancer Treatment



How can Physical Therapy Help?

Manual Therapy & Exercise

After surgery:

A wealth of research shows that *resistance training can improve your shoulder strength and mobility* after surgery for breast cancer.



Manual therapy from a trained Physical Therapist can also *improve movement of restrictive scar tissue* around the shoulder.



During Chemotherapy & Radiation:

Research shows that *aerobic and resistance exercise significantly decrease exhaustion and improve quality of life* during treatment.



During chemotherapy, *physical therapy can prescribe exercise that will help your chemotherapy-induced fatigue.*



Complete Decongestive Therapy



A *Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT)* specializes in reducing the swelling and discomfort of lymphedema through use of:

Manual Lymph Drainage-Specialized massage for reducing swelling in your arm.

Compression Bandaging-Helps keep swelling down.

Compression Garments-Specially fit for you to wear, preventing swelling from happening again.

Exercise prescription-Functional strength training significantly reduces likelihood of developing lymphedema symptoms after breast cancer by 70%.

