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## Physical Therapy After Five Years

Reaching the five year point since first diagnosis is a big milestone for breast cancer patients. It is an important crossroads, particularly for women taking tamoxifen when after five years, the risks outweigh the benefits of continuing treatment. Modern day advancements continue to throw women lifelines, lowering the risk of breast cancer recurrence, making the five year mark a time to reflect on future treatment decisions. During this time when patients are returning for check-ups with their health care practitioners it's important to keep in mind that there may be limitations in breast cancer survivors' lives that they have resigned to live with but don't have to. Many patients still feel the after-effects of surgery and radiation many years after they occurred. Some patients have never mentioned it because they were so happy to be rid of the cancer that swelling in their arm or pain at the surgical site seemed small in comparison to fighting cancer. Some people tell a health care practitioner of their limitations early on during recovery and are told that it will fix itself with time, only to find that it doesn't. Still others try physical therapy and lymphedema programs with some benefit, but are discharged from therapy services before reaching their goal because of strict timelines with lymphedema programs or insurance companies.

Many patients complain of difficulty or pain moving their arm, finding comfortable sleeping positions at night or performing day to day activities like lifting their children or grandchildren. It's important to let patients know that if these problems have not resolved completely that physical therapy is warranted. A return to therapy is also beneficial for patients who have had physical therapy in the past and want to make more functional gains. The therapists at the Breast Health and Rehabilitation Center recognize the importance of patient focused healthcare, striving to give the patient every opportunity to reach their goals.

## Symptoms & Conditions We Treat

- \* Lymphedema (swelling)
- \* Impaired range of motion
- \* Weight gain
- \* Pain and dysfunction of the arm, trunk or breast
- \* Axillary cording: sensation of "pulling" in the tissue
- \* Impaired strength
- \* Impaired exercise tolerance

For more information on conditions we treat and our rehab team visit our website:

[www.breastrehab.com](http://www.breastrehab.com)