

■ Things to Avoid After Mastectomy, Lymph Node Dissection, or Radiation

1. Injury & Trauma to the Affected Arm/Side

- Avoid cuts, scratches, punctures, and burns (gardening without gloves, pet scratches, burns from cooking/ironing).
- Avoid blood pressure cuffs, blood draws, or injections in the at-risk arm.
- Prevent bug bites or sunburn — always use insect repellent and sunscreen.

2. Excessive Pressure & Constriction

- Avoid tight jewelry, bras, or clothing straps on the affected arm/chest.
- Avoid carrying heavy purses, backpacks, or grocery bags on that side.
- Avoid leaning or resting prolonged weight on the arm (like during sleep or desk work).

3. Extreme Heat & Temperature Exposure

- Avoid hot tubs, saunas, and heating pads directly on the affected arm/chest.
- Be careful with long sun exposure — radiation-treated skin is especially sensitive.
- Avoid very hot showers/baths that increase swelling risk.

4. Inactivity & Overexertion

- Avoid long periods of immobility — don't let the arm dangle for extended time.
- Avoid sudden, strenuous, repetitive activity (scrubbing floors, heavy lifting, intense upper-body workouts) without clearance and gradual build-up.
- Avoid complete inactivity too — gentle, progressive exercise is important.

5. Skin & Nail Risks

- Avoid cutting cuticles (push them back instead).
- Avoid harsh chemicals (cleaning products, acetone, strong detergents) without gloves.
- Avoid dry or cracked skin — dryness invites infection (moisturize regularly).

6. Infections & Inflammation

- Avoid untreated cuts, insect bites, or rashes — they can trigger cellulitis.
- Avoid tattoos or piercings on the at-risk side.
- Avoid ignoring even mild redness, warmth, or fever — early intervention is key.

■ General Protective Habits

- Always wear gloves for gardening, dishwashing, or cleaning.

- Maintain healthy body weight — obesity raises lymphedema risk.
- Use compression garments if prescribed (especially when flying or exercising).
- Keep skin moisturized and protected.
- Do light, regular exercise to keep lymph moving (walking, stretching, gentle arm lifts).