



For Immediate Release

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Breast Cancer Patients Limit Mobility through Disuse

(Bend, Oregon, March 14, 2018) Step & Spine Physical Therapy announced improvements in mobility and recovery time following breast cancer surgery when specific physical therapy treatments are utilized versus disuse or home exercise alone. A recent [study](#) found that a customized physical therapy exercise program that focuses on lymphedema prevention caused a faster return of range of motion after axillary node dissection. In this procedure, lymph nodes, many near or under the arm, have been removed.

Considered the most distressing complication of breast cancer surgery is swelling of the lymph nodes between the breast and underarm, called Lymphedema. This common condition causes significant limitation in the affected arm's range of motion and can last months or longer. Simple tasks like dressing oneself become monumental and overwhelming, limiting a woman's ability to do things for herself.

But it doesn't end there. Other complications can arise from having breast cancer surgery, and patients often don't know what questions to ask of their surgical team.

If you have shoulder surgery, your doctor is going to recommend physical therapy as part of your rehabilitation. The same should be true after breast cancer surgery. However, this isn't happening in many medical offices across the country. By patients not taking appropriate measures early, the problem can compound and create a decreased likelihood of a full range of motion returning.

Redmond, Oregon resident, Nancy, did her homework before having a mastectomy of her left breast. After having a lumpectomy and radiation on her right breast years before, she wanted her healing process to go as smoothly as possible. She reached out to Step & Spine Physical Therapy's Redmond location and connected with [Jolene Kjorstad, PT, DPT](#).

"I ask a lot of questions of my healthcare providers," said Nancy. "You should never assume the doctor is going to tell you everything you need to know. You have to advocate for your health. "My doctor recommended I begin physical therapy a month after surgery," she added.

Initially, after surgery, Nancy wasn't able to do many of the things she enjoyed, such as painting and swimming, because of decreased range of motion caused by scarring. Through a



team approach that consisted of education, massage, and physical therapy, Jolene and [Carolyn Wise, LMT](#), were able to help Nancy fully recover and prevent lymphedema.

“Carolyn taught Nancy home techniques for lymph drainage using gentle massage applied in a specific order,” said Kjorstad. “Once her scar healed, I began using cupping to improve scar mobility,” she added.

Scar tissue after a mastectomy often creates a significant decrease in mobility.

“Specific exercises, stretches and other therapies can improve a patient’s range of motion while building strength,” said [Barrett Ford, PT](#), and owner of Step & Spine Physical Therapy.

Cynthia Hill has a similar story to Nancy’s. She asked a lot of questions before having breast cancer surgery and therefore was provided a rehabilitation program that helped her heal faster without complications.

“I do my exercises and massage regularly, which prevents lymphedema and other issues from happening,” said Mrs. Hill. “I can feel tingling in my arm, which tells me I need to start doing my massage and exercises,” she added.

In time, physical therapy should become the standard of care following breast cancer surgery. Until then, it is important for women to become better informed and advocate for rehabilitation assistance during the recovery process.

About Step & Spine Physical Therapy

For over eight years, Step & Spine Physical Therapy has been helping Central Oregonians live more active lives by creating individualized therapeutic plans and by providing education that empowers patients to achieve long-term positive results. The programs offered at Step & Spine Physical Therapy accomplish this through appropriate direction and treatment via mechanical diagnosis and therapy of the spine and extremities. With three Central Oregon locations in Bend, Redmond, and Sisters, Step & Spine Physical Therapy is here for you, regardless of where you live, work, or play.

If you would like more information about this topic, please call Melanie Herron at (541) 526-1347 or email marketing@stepandspine.com.

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