

# Strength training may prevent side effect of breast cancer surgery

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(HealthDay)—Strength training might benefit breast cancer survivors

who've undergone surgery, researchers suggest.

In a small study, weightlifting appeared to help prevent swelling in the arms and chest, a common side effect of [breast cancer treatment](#).

The study included 27 breast cancer survivors who did supervised moderate-intensity strength workouts twice a week. Each woman's regimen was matched to her ability.

The women were checked every two weeks. Three had reductions in swelling and the rest did not develop any swelling. Many of the women also said they were better able to perform everyday tasks, such as opening jars or lifting heavy objects.

"At one time, women were told they shouldn't do upper-body activities after surgery and treatment because doctors thought it could actually cause swelling to become worse," said study author Lynn Panton. She is a professor of exercise science at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

"But we're finding that [strength training](#) can really help women recover from treatment and help prevent and reduce this swelling," Panton explained in a university news release.

Breast cancer surgery often includes removal of [lymph nodes](#). As part of the body's immune system, lymph nodes help filter out harmful substances. But because breast cancer can spread to nearby lymph nodes, these organs are often removed. Without lymph nodes, the body has difficulty draining a type of fluid that can build up, resulting in swelling.

"Activity facilitates blood flow, so we thought this type of training would likely help women," Panton said.

The study was published recently in the journal *Supportive Care in*

*Cancer.*

In a follow-up study, Panton's team will examine how strength training affects breast cancer survivors' body fat, bone health, fitness level and quality of life.

In 2015, there were almost 3 million [breast cancer survivors](#) in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society.

**More information:** The American Cancer Society offers advice for [breast cancer survivors](#).

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