

Managing your lymphoedema

Skin care

People with lymphoedema are very vulnerable to infection and any dry or cracked skin can increase this risk as it provides a route into the bloodstream.

Follow this advice to keep your skin healthy:

Dry your skin well, especially between toes and fingers

Treat any cuts or scratches with an antiseptic cream immediately

Use an insect repellent to avoid being bitten during summer months or on holiday

Use a cream or electric razor on limb to remove unwanted body hair

Do not have blood, blood pressure or injections taken on the affected limb

Avoid sunburn, wear a high factor sun lotion or don't expose the skin

Avoid hot baths, sauna and sunbeds

Apply cream/lotion in an evening (it will soak into your skin overnight)

Hosiery hints

Apply hosiery first thing in the morning

Do not fold the top over your hosiery

Ensure there are no wrinkles in your hosiery

Do not cut your hosiery (it won't work properly and it's expensive)

Do not tumble dry or dry on direct heat

Aim to take a daily walk

Try wearing rubber gloves when applying hosiery (it helps to get it on)

Do not carry heavy weights on your arm or put excess pressure on it

Do not walk around bare foot if your leg is affected

Do not wear low fronted or high heeled shoes if your legs are affected; they will make the swelling worse

Exercise

Recommended exercises include walking, swimming, light aerobics, cycling, yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi. Avoid vigorous, repetitive movements against resistance; use weights at the gym with care. Gradually build up your exercise programme and general fitness.

At the Woodside Clinic we also encourage our lymphoedema patients to participate in Nordic Walking to stimulate the lymphatic system.

Walking is a highly recommended exercise for those who suffer from lymphoedema of either the upper or lower extremities. Nordic Walking is extremely useful, as the weight of the legs is supported by the poles.

EXERCISE FOR THE LYMPHOEDEMA OF THE LEG



These exercises are best done lying on a bed or floor with the leg raised on pillows or cushions. You may support your head with a pillow if necessary.



1) Slowly and firmly bring one knee up to the chest.



2) Slowly straighten leg and lower down onto the pillows.
Repeat alternate legs 10 times.



3) Slowly and firmly point foot towards the floor then bring back as far as it will go. Repeat 10 times.



4) Slowly and firmly rotate feet making circular movements with pointed toes. First clockwise, then anti-clockwise. Repeat 10 times.

EXERCISE FOR THE LYMPHOEDEMA OF THE ARM

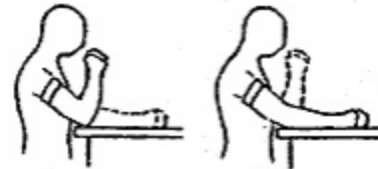
Place hands on top of head and bring down to shoulders. Repeat 10 times



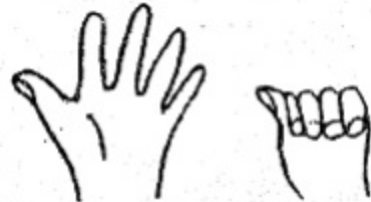
Place hands behind head and then bring down to behind back in wide circular movement. Repeat 10 times.



Slowly raise and lower arms from the elbow. Repeat 10 times.



Clench and unclench hands and fingers. Repeat 10 times on both hands



Hold arms down with hands clasped together and raise to above shoulder height. Repeat 10 times



Repeat all exercises twice daily.

Simple Lymphatic Drainage (SLD) for Lymphoedema Of The Arm

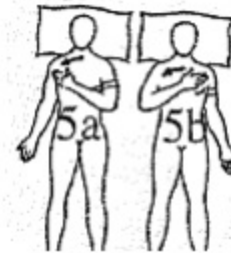
Lymphatic drainage is used to encourage fluid to drain from the swollen, congested arm to an area where it can drain normally. This massage concentrates on clearing fluid from the chest and swollen arm and should be performed at least twice daily.

1) Ensure that you are in a comfortable position lying or sitting and that the area to be massaged is free from oil or cream.

2) Massage the lymph glands in the side of the neck in a back and downwards, circular motion 5 times. Then move hand down a finger width and massage in the same way 5 times.

3) Massage collarbone in an outwards direction. Repeat 5 times

4) Now massage the unaffected armpit in the direction of back and up, 5 times. Repeat this movement 4 finger widths lower



5) To massage the chest, start close to the unaffected arm (Fig 5a) and gently massage the fluid across the chest wall pushing away, towards the unaffected arm, but moving gradually closer to the affected arm (Fig 5b). If it is more comfortable, use the unaffected arm to massage. This should be done for 5-10 minutes covering the whole of the chest area.

6) If someone is able to help you, ask them to massage your back starting at the unaffected arm, moving towards the swollen arm.

7) Finish the session with a short breathing exercise which helps to clear the deep lymphatic system. Place both hands on the abdomen and breathe in slowly and deeply. Hold for two seconds and release. Repeat 5 times.

