

LYMPHOEDEMA SELF MANAGEMENT.

3. EXERCISE

Exercise is a very important part of managing lymphoedema. The body depends on muscle pump action which occurs during exercise and movement to drain fluid through the lymph vessels.

Exercise will also prevent muscles from becoming weak and joints from becoming stiff.

GENERAL:

- Whilst exercise is important, strenuous movements with a swollen limb should be treated with caution or avoided e.g. pushing or lifting heavy objects, carrying heavy shopping, and vigorous exercise.
- Exercise should be performed wearing your compression garments to enhance the muscle pump action.
- Try to use your swollen limb normally, and keep a good balance between doing sufficient movement and exercise, but don't forget to listen to your body and rest your swollen limb if it gets tired and sore.
- Try to do tasks such as ironing or vacuuming a little at a time and regularly swap hands if possible.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Everyone has a different level of fitness and ability, it is important to find the right balance for you.
- If you are returning to exercise, start with short sessions where you do not overstrain yourself and slowly build up. If you are not sure what activities would be appropriate please ask your lymphoedema therapist or physiotherapist.
- You may need firmer compression garments when you exercise, your lymphoedema therapist can advise you on this.
- The swollen limb should be protected during activities to prevent injury.
- It is advised to avoid activities such as weight-lifting or press-ups if you have arm swelling.
- Swimming or just exercising in water can be beneficial.
- Remember to gently warm up and cool down before and after any exercise, adding in breathing exercises to your routine.
- Finish off with a warm or cool bath or shower, avoid using a sauna or steam room as the heat may increase the swelling.

ABDOMINAL DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing is beneficial in encouraging lymphatic drainage as the movement of the diaphragm improves circulation.

Place the tips of your fingers to your breast bone, take a deep breath in and move your hands out to your sides so your palms are facing forward. Hold your breath and this position for 5 seconds and as you breathe out bring your hands back to your breastbone fingers pointing inwards.

Repeat 5 times in total and then rest.