

Lymph Drainage Exercises for Upper Extremity

Decongestive exercises are important to do to help manage your lymphedema, especially in the early phase of treatment. The exercises should be done in the following order: trunk, neck, shoulder, and hand. Do 3 to 5 repetitions of each exercise. You may choose to do more, but it is important to follow them in order. It does not have to be a strong muscle contraction to work; the idea is to simply contract the muscle. If you have problems with doing any of these exercises, talk to your physical therapist about the changes that can be made. **Your bandages or sleeve should be worn during the exercises.**

Abdominal Breathing Exercises - Steps to Follow:

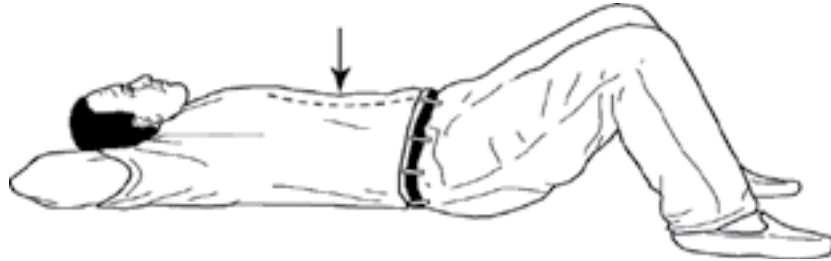
1. Get comfortable and relax your neck and shoulders. You can sit or lie down. Place one hand on your upper chest and place the other hand on your belly button. Use your hands to feel the movements as you breathe in and out.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose and feel the hand on your stomach move out. Do not let your shoulders move up. The hand on your chest should not move.
3. Breathe out slow and gentle through your mouth. Pucker your lips as if you were going to whistle or blow out a candle. The hand on your stomach should move in as you breathe out. Breathe out as long as you can until all the air is gone.
4. To help keep the lymphatic system moving well, practice two breaths every hour using the steps for abdominal breathing exercises.



This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Pelvic Tilt

- Lie on your back with knees slightly bent and feet flat. Using your stomach muscles “tilt” your pelvis and flatten your lower back into the floor or bed. Imagine pressing down on a penny with the small of your back and count to ten. Release and repeat.



Partial Sit Up with Breathing

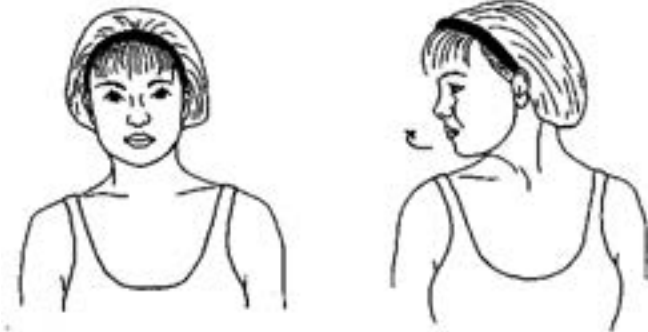
- Inhale by breathing into your belly. As you exhale, slightly lift your head and shoulders off the floor, reaching forward with your hands. **Be careful not to strain your neck.**



Neck Exercises

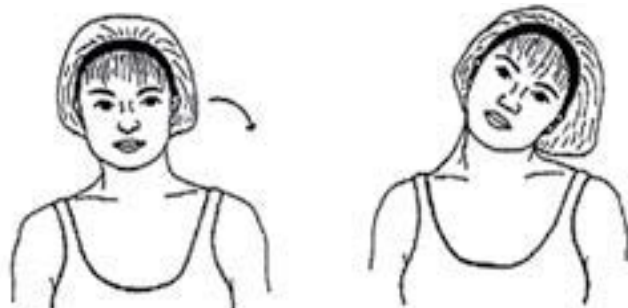
Neck Rotation:

- Turn your head slowly to the right as you inhale and count to five. Return to the center as you exhale. Repeat to the left.



Head Tilt

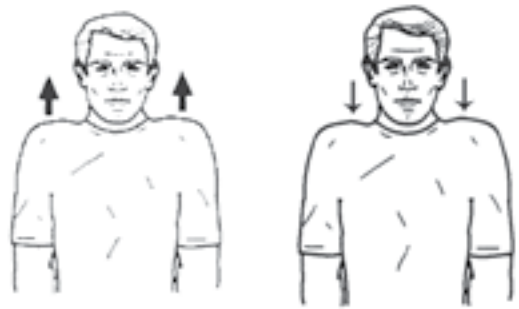
- Gently move your right ear toward your right shoulder, hold for 5 seconds, and then slowly bring head back to the center. Repeat on other side.



Shoulder Exercises

Shoulder Shrug:

- Lift both shoulders towards your ears as you inhale, exhale and return to relaxed position. Next, pull shoulders down as far as possible while inhaling, exhale and return to relaxed position.



Shoulder Rolls

- Roll shoulders back making a smooth continuous circle.



Shoulder Blade Squeeze

- Bend elbows to about 90 degrees, keeping them close to your body, pulling them back toward the center of your body, trying to squeeze the shoulder blades together.



Isometric Hand Press

- Place the palms of your hands together, bending your elbows. Keep your palms together while breathing in and count to four, then relax and breathe out for four breaths.



Elbow Bend

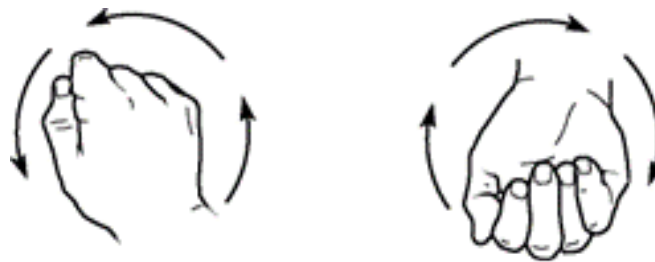
- Bring your hand towards your shoulder, and return arm back to the side. Repeat.



Hand Exercises

Wrist Circles

- With your hand in a fist. Make small circles and try to move only from the wrist. Perform circle motion in both directions.



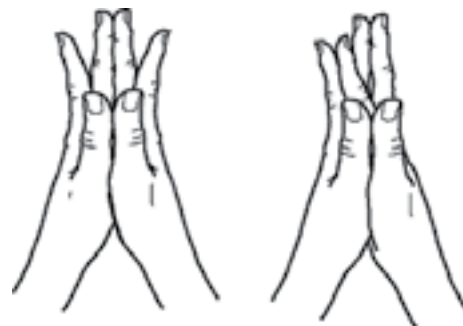
Fist Clench

- Make a fist hold for 3 seconds, then slowly open hand and straighten fingers.



Active Finger Movement

- Palms together in front of you. Move fingers away from each other, one pair at a time. Then move fingers together, moving from one side to the other.



You may end your exercise session with more abdominal breathing. It may also be a good idea to continue lying down, and elevate your arm on a pillow while relaxing for a few minutes.