Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) Massage: Upper Extremity (Arm)

Here are instructions on how to do massage to help drain fluid from your upper extremity (arm).

Things to know about MLD Massage

- Use only gentle pressure, just enough to see your skin move.
- Massage should not be painful.
- Do not rub your skin red.
- Do massage each day.
- Repeat each step 5 to 10 times.
- The massage should take about 15 to 30 minutes.

How to do MLD Massage

It is important to only do this massage if you have been told to do so by your physical therapist. Your physical therapist will teach you how to do this massage at home. Do each step 5 to 10 times.

- Abdominal (belly) breathing: Breathe in (inhale) so your belly expands. Breathe out (exhale) to deflate your belly and pull your belly button into your spine.

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

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• Use 3 fingers to gently massage the soft spot at the area where your neck and shoulder meet. (Number 1)

• Gently massage both sides of your neck, just below your ears. (Number 2)

• Pump the lymph nodes in both of your armpits. (Number 3) To pump the lymph nodes, use the flat surface of your fingers to gently press in to the armpit and then release.

• Use the flat surface of your hand to massage across the front of your chest. Start on your involved side and move to your uninvolved side. (Number 4)

• If told to do so by your physical therapist, pump the lymph nodes in your groin on your involved side. Then use the flat surface of your hand to massage from your armpit down the side of your trunk toward your groin. (Number 5)

• Use the flat surface of your hand to massage your upper arm, moving up from your elbow to your shoulder. Massage up the front, back and outside of your arm. (Number 6)

• Use your thumb to massage circles at the bend of your elbow and the back of your elbow. (Number 7)

• Use the flat surface of your hand to massage your forearm from the top of your wrist to the top of your elbow. Then massage your forearm from the bottom of your wrist to the bottom of your elbow. (Number 8)

• Use your thumb or 2 fingers to do circles from each knuckle up to your wrist. Use your fingers to massage your palm from the center to the outside of your hand. (Number 9)
• “Milk” each finger, including your thumb. Start at your nail bed and gently massage out toward your hand. (Number 10)

• Take 2 abdominal (belly) breathes to end the massage. Put a low pH lotion (pH level 4 to 6) on your arm.

Therapist Name: _________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________

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