Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) 
Massage: Lower Extremity (Leg)

Here are instructions on how to do massage to help drain fluid from the lower extremity.

Things to know about MLD

- Use only gentle pressure, just enough to see the skin move.
- Massage should not be painful.
- Do not rub the skin red.
- Massage the skin in half circles (“rainbow” shape massage stroke). After it is stretched, let the skin return to the starting position.
- Do massage each day.
- Repeat each step 5 to 7 times.
- The massage should take about 30 minutes.

How to do MLD

You should only do this massage if you have been instructed by a physical therapist.

1. Deep breathing: Exhale pulling your belly button into the spine, inhale and inflate belly. Do this 2 times.
2. Find your collar bone and place your fingers into the hollow area behind the collar bone. Massage the skin lightly in a semi-circle.
3. Pump the lymph nodes in the armpit. To pump the nodes, use the flat surface of your fingers. Gently press in to the armpit then release.

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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4. Place your hand on the top of your thigh with your thumb near the fold where your leg joins the body. Massage the skin in a half circle ("rainbow" shape massage stroke) up and out toward the side of your leg.

5. Use the flat surface of your hand to massage the area from your groin to your armpit.

6. Start at the inner area of the thigh, close to the groin. Use the flat part of your hand and massage the skin from your inner thigh to outer thigh, as you move down toward your knee. Gently massage the area from your knee to your thigh on the outside of your leg.

7. Use the flat surface of your hand to massage the skin below, at, and above the knee on the front and side of your knee. Next use the flat surface of your fingers to gently press and release the area on the back of your leg behind the knee.

8. Use the flat surface of your hand to massage the front of your lower leg from ankle to knee.

9. Bend your knee and use the flat surface of your hand to massage the skin on the back of the calf, starting at the ankle and moving toward the knee.

10. Use your thumbs or 2 fingers and make upward circles over each side of the ankle.

11. Again, with thumbs or 2 fingers start at the base of the toes and make circles toward the ankle.

12. Take two deep breaths to end the massage. Apply a low pH lotion (Eucerin) to your leg before putting your compression bandages on the affected leg.