

Self-management techniques

Deep breathing (e.g. Tai Chi breathing)

Helps to clear the central pathways.



- Start with your hands on your chest.
- Take a slow breath in, and bring your arms up.
- Squeeze the muscles behind your shoulder blades.
- Hold the breath in your lungs.
- Slowly let your breath out and bring your arms back down to your chest.
- Repeat five times (work to your tolerance).

Skin care

- Keep skin moisturised.
- Avoid sunburn.
- Treat cuts, bites and scratches.
- Watch for any infection or for cellulitis.

Apply moisturiser in a very light manner over irradiated skin. Don't forget to moisturise other at-risk areas like the arm on the side of the operation.

Benefits of compression therapy

Compression minimises the size of the limb by:

- Increasing tissue pressure.
- Supporting your muscle pump to propel fluid along the limb.
- Reducing swelling.
- Maintaining a reduction in limb size.
- Reducing the risk of increased swelling.

Refer to the HETI Online 'Lymphoedema Intervention' module for details of contraindications and financial support options.

General exercise

Helps move lymph fluid through your lymphatic system and maintain a healthy weight.

- Build up gradually.
- Aim for 30 to 60 mins, 5 days a week.
- Try for moderate to high intensity exercise.

Elevation



Elevation of the affected limb can allow the excess fluid to drain.

Elevate the affected limb for at least 30 minutes a day (if tolerated).

For example, place the arm above 90 degrees, with the wrist higher than the elbow, and the elbow higher than the shoulder.

Self-massage

- Massage directly onto the skin for best results.
- Massage gently and softly.
- No oils or creams.
- Circular massage to stimulate nodes.
- Stroking to shift fluid.
- See the online module for techniques.



Self-massage may have to be modified or discontinued during radiation treatment. **STOP** massage if you get an infection or cellulitis.

Use circular massage to clear the lymph nodes in the groin and underarm areas.

Use gentle strokes to move fluid towards the cleared nodes.

These are general principles only. They may need to be adapted for individual patients.

Lymphatic stimulating exercises

Knee bends

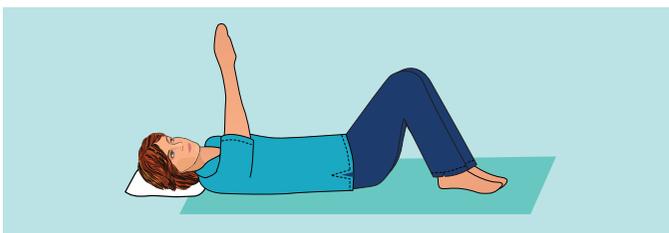


Knee bends help to empty out the groin nodes.

- Lie down with knees bent and heels on the floor.
- Bend a leg at the hip to bring the leg closer to your body.
- Hold for a count of five seconds, and then put your foot down on the floor.
- Stretch out your leg.
- Alternate legs. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

If unable to perform knee bends unassisted, use hands to help.

Straight arm shoulder raises



- Lying down, start with arms relaxed at the side of your body. Keep shoulders relaxed.
- Slowly lift your affected arm up to no higher than ear level.
- Lower to starting position.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Elbow circles



- Place your hands on your shoulders.
- Make circular movements with your elbows.
- Circles should be as large as possible.
- Change direction periodically.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Elbow circles



- Sit or stand up straight.
- Roll your shoulders in a circle backward, and then forward.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Elbow flexion



- Start by bending your affected arm at waist level with palm facing towards the ceiling.
- Bend your elbow towards your shoulder while keeping your palm facing up.
- Lower to starting position.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Fist pumping in elevation



- Lift your affected arm up and spread your fingers.
- Make a fist and then release it.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.
- You could also do this exercise by squeezing a ball or a pair of rolled up socks.