

## Exercises for Arm

### Lymphoedema

#### Patient information leaflet

It is important to exercise when you have lymphoedema, or are at risk of developing it. Research shows that muscle contraction helps lymph move through the lymphatic system and vessels, as well as keeping your joints and muscles strong to reduce pains and aches.

Deep breathing exercises can also help the flow of the lymph fluid through the body. It allows lymph to flow into the lymph system in the chest away from the area with lymphoedema. They can also aid with relaxation.

As well as the exercises in this booklet, try and do some exercise every day. Start exercising gently and build up slowly. Walking can be a good way to start, gradually increasing the distance and pace. Yoga and Pilates are also beneficial; they are gentle forms of exercise that encourage movement, stretching and breathing. Other examples include tai chi, cycling or swimming.

Exercise also helps to keep your weight within normal limits. This will help to manage your lymphoedema.

Talk to your doctor or lymphoedema specialist before you start any new exercise, or if you have any concerns.

Wear your compression sleeve/garment when you are exercising if you have one.



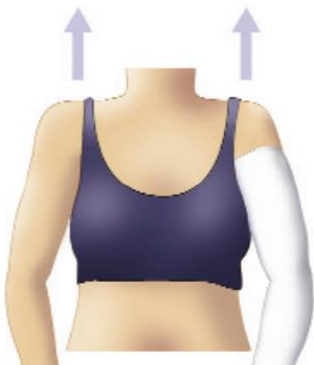
The following exercises can be completed in the sitting or standing position. Movements should be gentle and rhythmical. Repeat each exercise 5 – 10 times unless otherwise stated. Begin slowly and build up. These exercises should not be painful. If your limb feels tired or uncomfortable, ease off or stop. Always wear your compression bandages/garment(s).

### Exercise 1 - Deep breathing



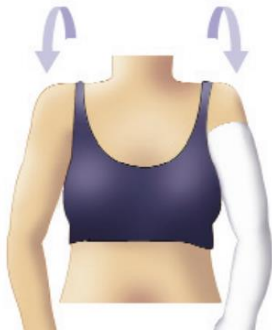
- Sit or lie with your shoulders and upper chest relaxed, and hands resting below your ribs
- Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, feeling your hand rise as your abdomen rises (imagine you have a balloon in your tummy and you're blowing it up)
- Breathe slowly out through your mouth, feeling your abdomen flatten again (deflating the balloon)
- Repeat 5 times before (and after) you do your arm exercises

### Exercise 2 – Shoulder Shrugs



- Shrug your shoulders up towards your ears
- Relax and drop them back down

### Exercise 3 – Shoulder Circles



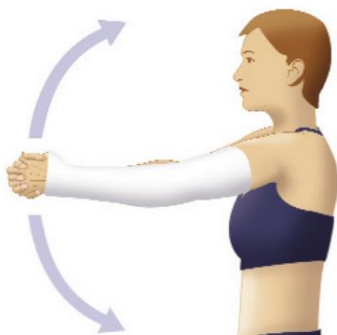
- Rotate your shoulders forwards 5 times
- Rotate your shoulders backwards 5 times

### Exercise 4 – Shoulder Abduction



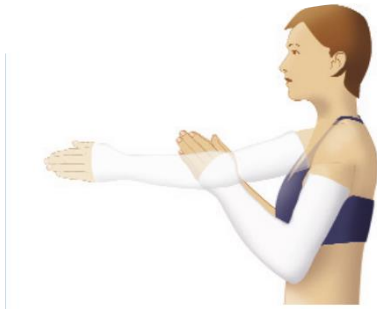
- Lift your affected arm up to the side as far as you can
- Relax it back down again
- You can put a small ball or rolled towel under your armpit – as you move your arm squeeze the ball/rolled towel

### Exercise 5 – Shoulder flexion



- Clasp your hands together
- Lift your arms straight up in front of you, as far as is comfortable
- Relax back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times

#### Exercise 6 – Breast Stroke



- Place your hands in the prayer position
- Push the hands forward extending the arms
- Separate the hands, swinging the arms to the side and drawing the elbows back
- Return the hands to the prayer position
- If this is too difficult, do the exercise at waist height

#### Exercise 7 – Boxing



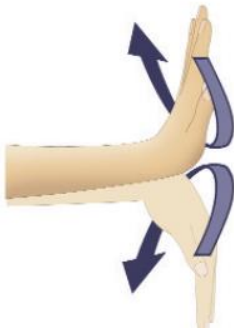
- Lift your arms up in front of your chest
- Slowly punch alternate arms out in front of you

## Exercise 8 – Elbow bends



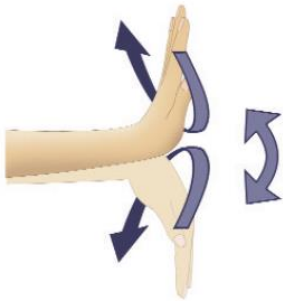
- Have the arm straight, bend at the elbow, and straighten again
- You can put a ball or rolled towel in your elbow crease, try and squash the ball/rolled towel when you bend your arm

## Exercise 9 – Wrist Bends



- Bend the wrist forward and down, so your fingertips point to the floor, hold for 5 seconds
- Raise the wrist up and back, so your fingertips point to the ceiling
- You can rest your arm on a cushion with your hand hanging over the end.

### Exercise 10 – Wrist Circles



- Rotate the wrist clockwise 5 times
- Rotate the wrist anti- clockwise 5 times

### Exercise 11 – Making a Fist



- Make a fist with your affected hand
- Slowly open, straighten and spread your fingers out wide

### Exercise 12 – Finish with Deep Breathing (same as exercise 1)



- Repeat 5 times