

Exercises for Lower Limb Lymphoedema Patient information leaflet

It is important to exercise when you have lymphoedema, or are at risk of developing it. Exercise produces muscle contraction, and this 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 away from the area with lymphoedema. They can also aid with relaxation.

As well as the exercises in this booklet, try and do some other exercise every day. Start exercising gently and build up slowly. Walking can be a good way to start. Yoga and Pilates are also beneficial; these 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.

It's advisable to talk to your doctor, physiotherapist 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.



Exercise 1 - Deep breathing

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).

- Sit 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 tummy rises.
- Breathe slowly out through your mouth, feeling your tummy flatten again.
- Repeat 5 times before (and after) you do your leg exercises.



Exercise 2 – Marching on the spot

- March on the spot for one minute.
- Hold on to something if needed.



Exercise 3 – Knee bends in standing

- Stand up tall, bend your knee to take your heel towards your buttocks, and lower back to the floor.



Exercise 4 – Static glut squeeze

- Tighten your buttocks firmly so that it feels like you are rising from the seat.
- Hold this position for a few seconds, then relax.



Exercise 5 - Hip and knee bends in sitting

- Bring your knee up towards your chest, and then back down – as though you are marching in place



Exercise 6 – Knee extensions

- Straighten your leg out in front of you, pulling your toes towards the ceiling as you do
- Bend your knee so your foot returns to the floor



Exercise 7 – Ankle bends

- Bend your ankle up towards you, so your toes point to the ceiling.
- Bend your ankle down, pointing the toes to the floor.



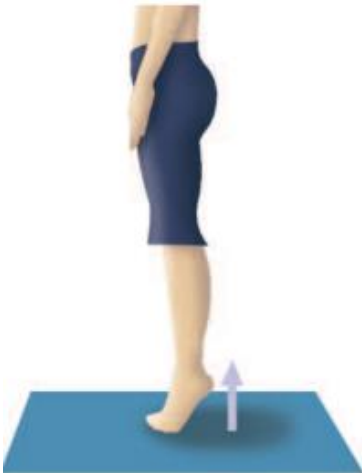
Exercise 8 – Ankle circles

- Rotate your ankle clockwise 10 times.
- Rotate your ankle anti-clockwise 10 times.



Exercise 9 - Standing heel raises

- Stand holding onto a firm surface.
- Raise your heels up off the floor. You should feel your calf muscle squeeze. Keep your body straight.
- Gently lower your heels back down to the floor.



Exercise 10 – Leg raises

This exercise may be difficult – only proceed if you feel able. If in doubt consult with your Lymphoedema or Therapy team.

- Lie on your back with your feet up against a wall and your knees straight
- Slowly bend the knees, sliding your feet down the wall
- Straighten your knees, sliding your feet up the wall
- Repeat 5 times.



Exercise 11 - Finish with Deep Breathing (see Exercise 1)

- Repeat 5 times.

