

## Exercise and positioning

Gentle exercise is an important component of preventing lymphoedema. Lymph flow depends on the muscles working like a pump to encourage drainage and prevent fluid from pooling.

Exercise helps in three ways:

1. It helps drain lymph fluid, and reduce oedema.
2. It maintains and improves flexibility to your joints and stretches muscles.
3. Improves posture.

Even simple and easy movements involve complicated muscle activity and you can have a workout by just carrying out activities around the house! .

Although exercise is a very important part of treatment, certain sorts of exercise can make the swelling worse. This can happen if the activity you are doing is harder and more demanding than usual, thereby placing extra demand on the lymph drainage system. It is important to build up your activity levels gradually and monitor that what you do does not increase your problems with lymphoedema.

When exercising, remember the following:

- Perform exercises in a **slow, gentle, and rhythmic** manner, they should not be painful.
- **Always wear your compression hosiery** whilst exercising - this will further enhance the pumping action of the lymphatic vessels.
- Avoid repetitive exercise or leaving the limb in the same position for a long time. Good posture and careful positioning of your swollen limb will also help you to control your lymphoedema.
- If any of these exercises cause you to become more breathless, increase your discomfort or results in further swelling **stop** doing the exercise and seek further advice.

**1. Abdominal breathing.** Take three sets of five deep breaths. Avoid becoming dizzy.

**2.** Either in sitting or lying position bend one leg at the hip and knee and gently squeeze the thigh into the abdomen using your arms. Repeat three times with each leg.



### 3. In Sitting

- a) Whilst in chair, walk legs backwards and forwards five times.
- b) Bend knees to 90, lift alternate legs by bending the hip five times.
- c) Straighten the knee and pull the foot up at the ankle and hold for three seconds then slowly bend the knee and relax, five times.
- d) Raise the heel off the ground and push the toes into the ground, hold for a count of three then lower the heels, and with the heels remaining on the floor bend the ankle so the foot of the foot rises off the floor hold for a count of three then relax repeat five times.
- e) Circle feet five times in each direction.
- f) With feet flat on the floor curl your toes five times.

### 4. In Standing

- a) Stand on toes, hold for count of three, slowly lower and relax. Repeat five times.
- b) Stand up straight and bend your knee slowly bringing your heel towards your buttocks. Slowly relax. Repeat five times.

When at rest always try to keep your legs elevated and well supported to heart level.

