

## WHY DO I NEED TO EXERCISE?

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 collecting in the tissues.

### EXERCISE HELPS IN 3 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!

### HELPFUL TIPS

- Perform exercises in a slow, gentle, and rhythmic manner, they should not be painful.
- Always wear your compression hoisery 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.
- Build up your activity levels gradually and monitor that what you do does not increase your problems with 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.

### ARM AND NECK EXERCISES

#### Abdominal breathing

- Take three sets of five deep breaths. Avoid becoming dizzy.

#### Neck

- Rotate the neck to the right, then the left, five times.
- Bend the neck and lower the chin onto chest, then extend the neck and look at the ceiling, five times.

#### Shoulder Girdle

- Elevate the shoulders then depress the shoulders, five times.

#### Shoulder

- Lift your arm letting the thumb lead the way, five times.
- Lift your arms out to the side of you and touch hands above the head if possible, five times.
- Place hands behind the back then behind the neck, ten times.

For the following exercises ensure the arm is supported on a table or the arm of a chair.

#### Elbow

- Start with the elbow bent and palm facing up, then straighten the elbow turning the hand so that the palm faces down.

#### Wrist

- Lift your hand as far back as it will go so that your fingers point to the ceiling, then bend the hand as far as it will go so that your fingers point to the floor.
- Circle the wrist to the right, five times, then to the left, five times.

#### Hand and Fingers

- Make a tight fist then stretch out the fingers, five times.
- Separate and bring together the fingers and the thumb, five times.

Good posture and careful positioning of your swollen limb will also help you to control your lymphoedema. Avoid slouching as this reduces lymphatic flow. Always ensure the affected limb is well supported at heart level and that your wrist and elbow are level.

## **LEG EXERCISES**

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.

In sitting

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

In standing

- Stand on toes, hold for count of three, slowly lower and relax. Repeat five times.
- Stand up straight and bend your knee slowly bringing your heel towards your buttocks. Slowly relax. Repeat this five times.
- When at rest always try to keep your legs elevated and well supported to hip level.