



Management of Genital Lymphoedema

Lymphoedema (swelling) of the genitals can happen when the lymphatic system in that part of your body can't work properly. This leaflet provides specific information and advice about managing your Lymphoedema. There are video films for men and women explaining Lymphoedema (also called genital oedema) and how to manage it. The links and QR codes for these videos are at the bottom of the page.

If I've had Surgery What Problems Might I Encounter?

Scarring

Your operation will leave a scar which may initially feel uncomfortable and tight when you move your body. This will ease as you repeat your exercises and continue to stretch this area. Adhering to your skin care management plan daily will also help to reduce the tightness of the scar.

Sensation

It is quite common to experience numbness or tingling around your operation site and sometimes onto your thighs and genitals. This can continue for up to 18 months, but it can also be long-term in some cases.

Swelling

It is common to experience swelling immediately following surgery due to the trauma as well as the removal of the lymph nodes. Your body will usually adapt to this change; however, if the swelling remains for longer than 3 months, this is called Lymphoedema.

Lymphoedema Management Plan:

1. Skin Care

It is important to moisturise your legs, lower stomach and even your genitals, daily. Samples of different creams are available for you to identify which suit you best. Unperfumed and lanolin free creams are recommended and your therapist will be able to advise you. A daily skin care routine will reduce your risk of developing an infection called Cellulitis. If you find that your skin is chaffing or rubbing when walking you could try applying something like Vaseline to alleviate it.

2. Movement & Exercise:

Regular movement and exercise is important as the pumping of the muscles encourages the flow of fluid through the vessels, improving lymphatic drainage. Exercise also helps to maintain the movement in your lower back, hips and knees and prevents stiffness in the joints.

It is important to move your legs and body following your operation in order to regain your full range of movement. You may find that these movements have become restricted following your surgery and this is often due to swelling, discomfort, stitches, clips and the positioning of drains in your skin. Gentle exercises will help to regain your range of movement, reduce swelling and prevent pain and stiffness.

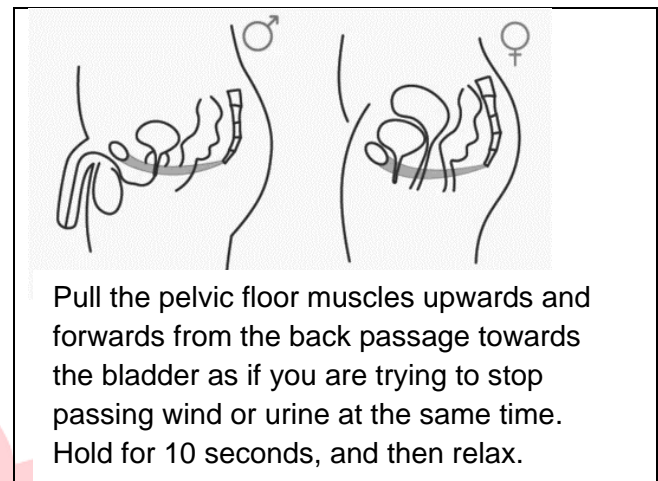
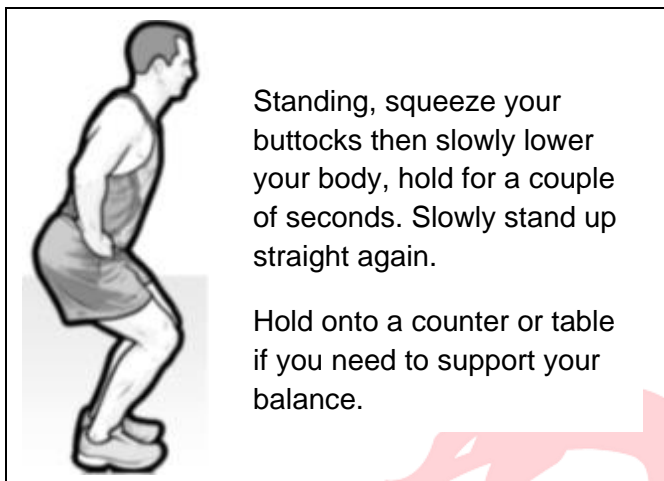
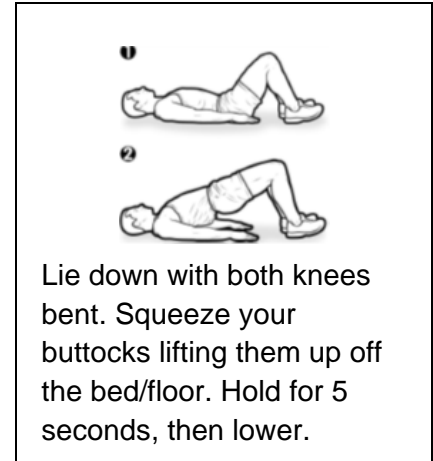
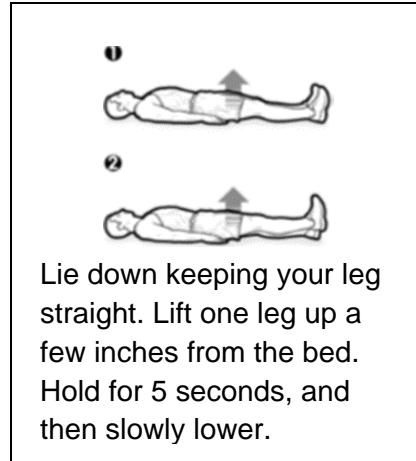
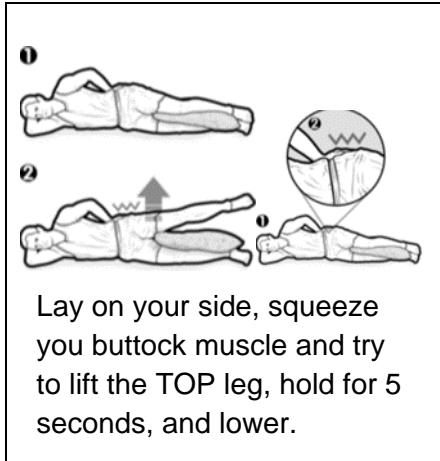
How Often Should I Exercise?

Hip and lower back stiffness and tightness can occur long after surgery so it is important to carry on doing these exercises until you have regained the range of movement you had before your operation.

Follow the link or QR code to view a short video: www.medic.video/w-lymph



Exercises should be performed 3 times a day. Repeat each exercise on both sides 10 times.



When can I return to normal activities?

After six weeks your scar should be healed and you should be able to move your body quite comfortably. There are no set rules as to when you should return to work, sports or hobbies. People react and heal differently to treatment, leaving some with less energy than others. Remember to progress activities slowly and listen to your body.

- **Walking:** a good exercise to maintain or improve health after an operation. Wear comfortable supportive underwear and avoid chaffing/ rubbing. Short daily walks will help.
- **Driving:** avoid driving until you have full control of a vehicle. Do not drive unless you are well, alert and are able to respond to an emergency. Check with your insurance company before you start driving.
- **Work:** this will depend on the type of job you do, and whether or not you will be receiving any further treatment. Your Surgeon, Physiotherapist or GP will be able to advise you on this.
- **Sport/Leisure:** If your scars have healed and you have good movement, you may begin swimming at six weeks. Most other leisure activities can be started within three to six months.

Posture

It is important to maintain good posture. Avoid slouching when you are sitting down, and ensure that you stand tall. It may be helpful to look at yourself in a mirror to ensure your shoulders and hips are in a good position. A good posture will help with the control of your pelvic floor, which helps your bladder and bowel.

3. Compression Garments

Compression garments may be provided, or recommended, to help control your swelling. On some occasions, foam pads may be needed to help soften any firm swelling. Please follow the instructions provided by your therapist.


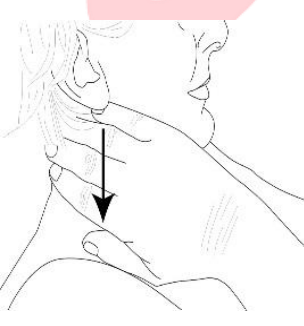
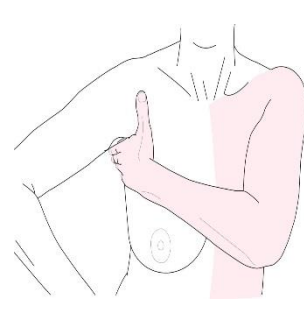
Garments need to be washed regularly, and if we have provided them they will be reviewed in clinic for replacement as required. If your genitals, abdomen or legs become increasingly painful or discoloured when wearing your garment, then remove immediately and contact your Lymphoedema therapist.




4. Simple Lymphatic Drainage (SLD)

This very gentle massage is part of the daily treatment for your swelling. It helps move the fluid from the swollen area to an area that drains more freely. Your therapist will teach you how to do SLD, which is described in the step by step guide below. If you are unable to perform the massage by yourself, a partner or carer could help you. If you struggle reaching some areas, try using a roller or a soft long-handled brush.

What to do:

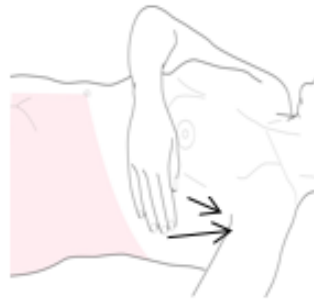
- Massage very slowly and gently. It should take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete
- Massage when you are comfortable, sitting or lying down is best
- Do not press too hard – your skin should not be marked by the pressure you apply
- Creams and oils are not needed. If you are hot and sticky, use a small amount of talcum powder
- Do not massage over an area that is inflamed or infected, including Cellulitis
- If you have any new or unexplained lumps: contact your GP or therapist immediately
- If you have recently finished radiotherapy, you need to wait for 6 weeks before you start the massage over that area

<p>Step 1 – Breathing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit or lie down with your shoulders relaxed and hands resting below the ribs • Breathe in and feel your stomach rising (imagine a balloon inflating under your hands) • Slowly breathe out and press gently inwards with your hands • Repeat five times 	
<p>Step 3 - Neck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place your hands on both sides of your neck below the ears • Gently stroke the skin down towards your collarbones and release • Repeat this movement 10 times 	
<p>Step 5 - Armpit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place your hand in your armpit • Massage upwards into your armpit and release (10 times) • Ensure the direction is always upwards • Repeat on both sides 	

<p>Step 2 – Specific Exercises (10 of each)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach up and out, then cross your arms over your stomach 2. Lift your leg, then put your foot back on the floor 3. Pelvic floor exercise as above 	
<p>Step 4 - Collarbones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place your index finger above, and your middle finger below your collarbone, so that the collarbone lies between these two fingers. • Gently push downwards and release. • Repeat 10 times on both sides 	
<p>Alternative Method for Step 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place your hand in your armpit • Cross the other arm across your body towards your opposite hip • Repeat 10 times on both sides 	

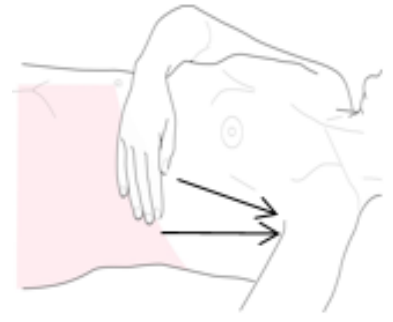
Step 6 – Above Waist

- Place your hand on the side of your chest above the waist (bad side)
- Stroke the skin upwards towards your armpit
- Repeat 10 times, always stroking into the armpit



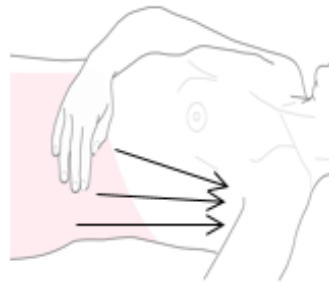
Step 7 – Waist

- Place your hand on your waist (you can use two hands if you like)
- Stroke the skin up towards your armpit
- Repeat 10 times



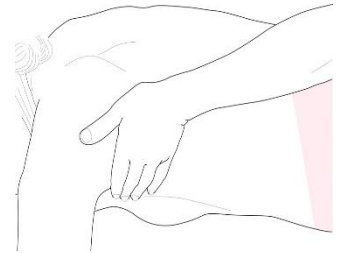
Step 8 – Below Waist

- Place your hand on your stomach below the waist
- Stroke the skin upwards over your waist up towards your armpit
- Repeat 10 times



Step 9 – Back – Armpit (if help available)

- You can lie on your front or side
- Helper places hand in your armpit
- Massage upwards into the armpit and release (10 times)
- Ensure the direction is always upwards



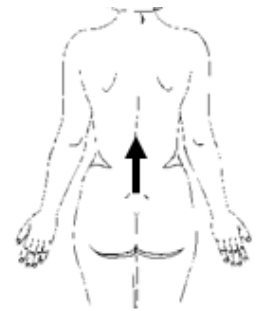
Step 9 – Back and Buttocks (if able)

- Starting on the upper back helper strokes the skin up into the armpit
- Next stroke up across the waist
- Then stroke up from the buttocks and back of the thigh
- Always stroke out to the side of the body and up to the armpit



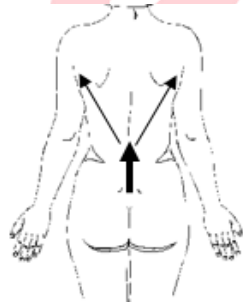
Step 10 – Genital Oedema (Back)

- Stroke up your spine from the coccyx to the lower ribs



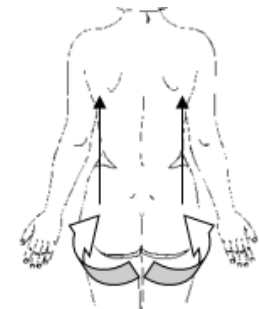
Step 11 – Genital Oedema (with help)

- Stroke up your spine and then end by spreading your hands and stroking towards each armpit



Step 12 – Genital Oedema

- Stroke the back of your thigh from the inner thigh to the outer thigh and then up to your armpits



Step 13 – Genital Oedema (Front)

- Stroke from the pubic bone outwards and then up to the armpits



Steps 13 and 14 – Finishing your SLD

Repeat Step 2 – **Specific Exercises** (10 each):

- Arms – arm up and out, then down and across
- Hips – lift leg up and down
- Pelvic floor – lift, hold and relax

Repeat Step 1 – **Breathing Exercise** (5 times)

- Sit or lie down with your shoulders relaxed and hands resting below the ribs
- Breathe in and feel your stomach rising
- Slowly breathe out and press gently inwards with your hands