

5 Easy Daily Steps to Manage Lymphedema (Swelling)

**“Don’t adapt to
living with heavy
legs or arms; learn
to manage it
instead”**

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About The Author

Dr. Sanket Vyas:

I have a Doctorate of Physical Therapy from Utica College, New York. I have over ten years of experience in successfully treating people with lymphedema. I have trained physical therapists in senior centers and several other types of facilities and groups to bring awareness to lymphedema and how to manage it.

People travel from across the DFW metroplex to Sure Cure Wellness to be treated for their lymphedema. They are always surprised to see results in just one or two sessions. I have learned that a comprehensive approach and proper education are the keys to seeing successful results. We have many patient testimonials to prove the success of this program.

Introduction

In this special report, I outline 5 very simple steps that can help you to manage lymphedema. What surprises me that there are millions of people affected by lymphedema and they have very little knowledge of how to manage it, including many of my patients. I have seen many patients that have just accepted that this is the way that their life is going to be and that they will have to walk around with heavily swollen limbs.

This guide is here to provide you with simple daily steps that can improve your quality of life. Imagine the effects that these steps can have on your life. You'll be surprised by how much better you feel by applying these simple steps.

Let's start with...

What is Lymphedema?

Lymphedema is the accumulation of protein-rich fluid in the tissue which causes excessive swelling on one or both arms or legs.

What Causes Lymphedema?

Lymphedema can be primary or secondary:

Primary lymphedema is related to developmental abnormalities of the lymphatic system.

Secondary lymphedema is caused by impairment of lymph vessels due to either trauma, tumor, surgery, infection or post venous thrombosis.

And now, on to my tips to manage lymphedema...

1. Self Lymphatic Massage

Professional personnel uses manual lymph drainage which is a special type of gentle massage that pushes fluid from a swollen part to working lymph nodes. You are about to perform a self-lymphatic massage at home with a simple **stretch and release of the skin towards the unaffected area.**

For example: for lymphedema on legs put one hand in the front of the leg and another hand behind the leg on the calf, stretch skin towards skin upward toward the knee and release the skin, move hands little lower and repeat the same stretch and release technique until you reach your ankle. Repeat about 10 times



2. Bandaging

Bandaging is a mainstay of treatment to reduce limb volume. There are two types of bandages: short stretch, and long stretch.

Long stretch bandages has extensibility up to 300%. An example of long stretch is an ace bandage.

Short stretch bandages have extensibility about 30-60%. An example of short stretch is Rosidal K. Short stretch bandages are more effective for lymphedema management.

For less irritation on the skin, after moisturizing skin, cover the skin with stocking like fabric or gauze also known as stockinette. There should be more layers distally and fewer layers as you go proximally to create a graded pressure to push fluid. Bandages shouldn't be so tight that it obstructs the flow.

What is the difference between bandages and compression sleeves?

- Compression sleeves maintain proper lymph flow but do not help with decongestion. Bandages are more effective in decongestion with severe lymphedema one should start with bandages and as it gets better, maintain with compression sleeves.
- Some research also proves that Kinesio taping assists with maintaining lymph flow even better than compression sleeves.

3. Decongestive Exercise

Exercise is a very important part of the daily routine. Lymphatic channel does not have active pumping so muscle and joint movement help lymph flow to push back into the bloodstream.

Exercise should be in the proper sequence to improve lymph flow. One should start with simple breathing exercise as a diaphragm movement significantly assist lymph fluid to flow towards bloodstream.

Diaphragmatic Breathing:

1. Put both your hands on your abdomen
 2. Breathe in through your nose and feel the rise of the abdominal wall
 3. Breath out through your mouth and feel the abdominal wall going in.
- Perform about 8-10 repetitions

Arms:

1. Make a fist and open
2. Rotate wrist clockwise and counterclockwise
3. Bend and extend elbows
4. Rotate shoulder in small circles clockwise and counterclockwise
5. Lift arms out in front of you
6. Lift arms out to your side

Legs:

Sitting position:

1. Toes curl
2. Ankle pump
3. Rotate ankle clockwise and counterclockwise

Standing position:

1. Heel raises
2. Bend knee backward with no movement in the hip (butt kicks)
3. Hip flexion with high marching
4. Kick back from the hip with knees straight

All exercises should be 10 repetitions twice a day.

Walking or biking are also great exercises, but make sure to keep the machine on a low setting.

4. Skin Care

Make a good habit of daily skincare. Any injury or infection can worsen the problem. With dry or flaky skin, chances of getting infections are higher.

- If your skin is in good condition, simply use moisturizing lotion once a day.
- Use an extra thicker moisturizer for dry and flaking skin.
- If you have fibrosis (harder skin) or skin debris then wash the area with Neutrogena bar of soap and a thicker moisturizer.
- Avoid wearing tight clothes
- Protect skin from the sun

5. Nutrition

There is no specific diet for lymphedema but a balanced diet is necessary to maintain it. Obesity and excessive weight can make lymphedema hard to manage. The purpose of a balanced diet is to avoid attracting more water towards affected extremities.

Salt attracts water, the current recommendation for salt intake is **2300 mg** for healthy individual and **1500 mg** for people who have cardio or kidney disease.

(It is easy to cross the recommended salt intake. For example: Just 1 tbsp of soy sauce has *879 mg* sodium 1 small bag of classic Lay's potato chips has *250mg* sodium.)

The recommendation for protein intake is about 0.36 grams/ pound of your body weight. If someone weighs 200 pounds, then their daily protein intake should be 72 grams. You can also check your personalized protein intake by going to:

<https://www.calculator.net/protein-calculator.html>

Positive thinking and consistency make a big difference in managing lymphedema!

Conclusion

After reading these steps, I hope I have cleared up some of the questions you may have, like when should I wear bandaged vs compression sleeves, what kind of exercise should I do, or what should I eat.

I have filtered the questions that I have been asked most frequently at my clinic to give you the answers to the most commonly asked questions in this small book.

I would also like to recommend that you visit a physical therapy clinic like ours, Sure Cure Therapy & Wellness, to learn more about self-care techniques.

As we conclude, I'd like to share a quote that we have up on the wall in our clinic which I like a lot:

“Suffer the pain of discipline, or suffer the pain of regret.”



Here's to your health!

-Dr Sanket Vyas

*****Health Advice Disclaimer:**

We make every effort to ensure that we accurately represent the injury advice and prognosis displayed throughout this guide. However, examples of injuries and their prognosis are based on typical representations of those injuries that we commonly see in our physical therapy clinics. The information given is not intended as representations of every individual's potential injury. As with any injury, each person's symptoms can vary widely and each person's recovery from injury can also vary depending upon background, genetics, previous medical history, application of exercises, posture, motivation to follow Physical Therapist's advice and various other physical factors. It is impossible to give a 100% complete accurate diagnosis and prognosis without a thorough physical examination and likewise the advice given for management of an injury cannot be deemed fully accurate in the absence of this examination from one of the Chartered Physical Therapists at Sure Cure Physical Therapy & Wellness. We are able to offer you this service at a standard rate. Significant injury risk is possible if you do not follow due diligence and seek suitable professional advice about your injury. No guarantees of specific results are expressly made.

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