

## Lymphedema support during the COVID-19 crisis



### Background<sup>1</sup>

- **Lymphedema alone does not make one more susceptible to the coronavirus.** Exception: lymphedema patients with extensive lymphatic abnormalities involving chest/lungs and with a generalized immune deficiency.
- The main **symptoms of COVID-19** (coronavirus disease 2019) include: fever, cough, aches and pains, shortness of breath and sensory disturbances (taste, smell).
- The **virus** causing COVID-19 is called SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2).
- **Viral entry:** The virus gets into your body through your nose, mouth or eyes when someone **coughs** or **sneezes** on you, or when you have it on your hands and then touch your own face.



### Precautions<sup>1</sup>

Those with lymphedema should take the same precautions as others, although this may be more of a challenge if you wear a compression glove as part of your treatment. These precautions are based on recommendations from the Lymphedema Support Network<sup>1</sup>:

- **Wash your hands** frequently during the day. Use hand sanitizer or gel if hand washing facilities are not available. If you use shared equipment such as keyboards, telephones etc. wipe them with antibacterial wipes between users.
- Get into the habit of **not touching your face, mouth and eyes.** Practice social distancing guidance & **avoid shaking hands.**
- If you cough or sneeze, **cover your mouth & nose** with a tissue or your sleeve at your elbow; dispose of the used tissue & wash your hands. For those with arm-lymphedema: sneeze into the elbow crook of the unaffected arm.
- **Keep your hands well moisturized** as frequent washing can make the skin dry and cracked which may lead to bacterial skin infections.



### Special advice for compression glove or sleeve with a hand piece

The following advice has been adapted from the Lymphedema Support Network<sup>1</sup>:

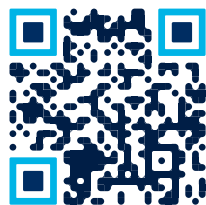
- If possible, wash your garments every day by following the manufacturer's instructions. If this is unfeasible, do not worry. Contact your health care provider to ask whether you can receive a spare set of garments.
- You may choose to wear a disposable plastic glove over your compression glove or hand piece while you are out and about, or if you are in a job that requires you to wash your hands frequently. However, please be aware that gloves can give a false sense of security and that you can easily contaminate yourself if they are not used properly.
- Carry a spare compression garment with you in a sealed plastic bag to use if you are worried your compression glove may have been contaminated (to save space, roll up your garment tightly). Put the dirty garment in the plastic bag and seal it up until it can be washed. Throw the plastic bag away.
- For further instructions, see the recommendations from the Lymphedema Support Network<sup>1</sup>.



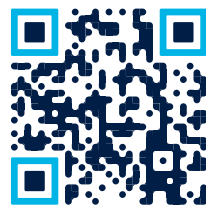
### Self manual lymphatic drainage

Check out the following videos:

One leg



Both legs






Arm



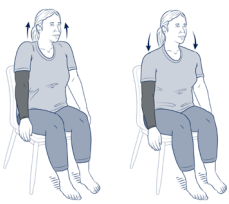
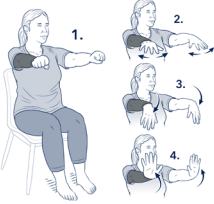
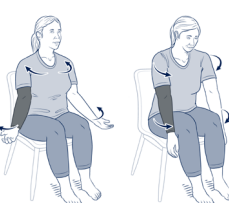
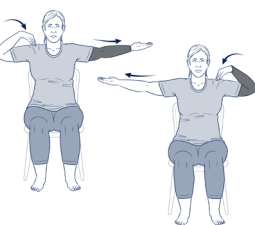

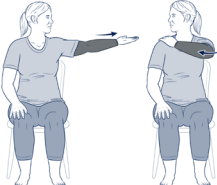


## Self-management exercises to promote blood & lymphatic circulation<sup>2</sup>


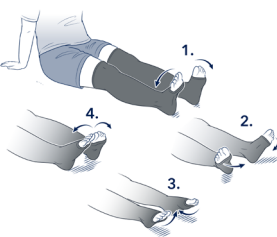
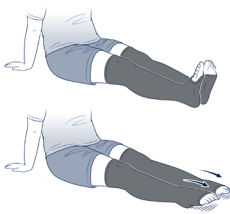
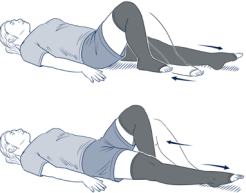

### Warm-up

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|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b></p>  | <p>March in place<br/>(1–2 minutes).</p> | <p><b>2</b></p>  | <p>Place your hands on<br/>your chest. Take a deep<br/>breath in; now let it out<br/>(10–20 times).</p> | <p><b>3</b></p>  | <p>Place your hands on<br/>your stomach. Take a<br/>deep breath in; now let<br/>it out (10–20 times).</p> |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|

### Arms

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b></p>    | <p>Move your shoulders<br/>up and down<br/>(10–20 times).</p>   | <p><b>4</b></p>    | <p>Clench your fists and<br/>stretch out your arms.<br/>Spread out your fingers.<br/>Bend your wrists down<br/>and then stretch them<br/>back up (10–20 times).</p> |
| <p><b>2</b></p>   | <p>Move your shoulders<br/>and arms backwards<br/>and forwards<br/>(10–20 times).</p>                                   | <p><b>5</b></p>   | <p>Touch your shoulder<br/>with one arm while<br/>stretching out the<br/>other arm. Switch sides<br/>(10–20 times).</p>   |
| <p><b>3</b></p>  | <p>Clench your fists. Move<br/>your fists up to your face<br/>and shrug your shoulders<br/>(5–10 seconds, 3 times).</p> | <p><b>6</b></p>  | <p>Stretch out your arm<br/>sideways and touch<br/>the opposite shoulder.<br/>Switch sides<br/>(10–20 times).</p>   |

### Legs

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b></p>  | <p>Flex and point your toes<br/>alternately (10–20 times).</p>        | <p><b>4</b></p>  | <p>Rotate your ankles<br/>(10–20 times).</p>  |
| <p><b>2</b></p>  | <p>Flex and point your<br/>toes simultaneously<br/>(10–20 times).</p> | <p><b>5</b></p>  | <p>Pull up one leg and<br/>stretch out the other.<br/>Switch sides<br/>(10–20 times).</p> |
| <p><b>3</b></p>  | <p>Curl your toes, then relax<br/>(10–20 times).</p>                  |  |   |