

Self Manual Lymph Drainage for Lower Extremity

Simple and easy to perform manual techniques are an integral part of the self-management program. In this stage, the patients have completed the intensive phase with the lymphedema therapist, and are familiar with the pressures and techniques used in Manual Lymph Drainage.

Ideally, the self-MLD protocol should be performed at least once a day for about 10-15 minutes, directly preceding the exercise program, and should be followed by compression therapy.

The stationary circles used in this self-treatment are based on the same principles as those performed by the lymphedema therapist. They should be executed using light pressure in the working phase, and the hand should relax completely during the resting phase of the circle. The circles should be large enough to stretch the skin, but the hand should not slide over the skin. Self-MLD for the leg should be performed lying on the back. Each stroke should be repeated 5-7 times on the same placement.

Note:

The self-MLD techniques shown in Figures 3-1 through 3-14 depict the sequence used for a lymphedema on the left leg.

Step-by-Step Instructions in Self-MLD for Lower Extremity Lymphedema

Pretreatment

Circles with the fingers lying flat above the collarbones on each side. Do each side separately and use the hand of the opposite side. Switch hands to manipulate the other side. The pressure on both sides is directed towards the neck (Fig. 3-1)



Fig 3.1

Circles in the center of the armpit on the same (affected) side. Pressure is given with the flat hand and is directed downward (deep) into the armpit (Fig. 3-2)



Fig 3.2

Circles with the flat hand on the side of the body, from the waist of the affected side to the lymph nodes in the armpit on the same side (in several placements). The pressure is directed towards the lymph nodes located in the armpit on the same side (Fig. 3-3)



Fig 3.3

Circles with the flat hand in the area of the inguinal lymph nodes on the opposite side (Inguinal lymph nodes are those lymph nodes, which are located in the groin area). The hand lies just below the inguinal ligament (which runs approximately parallel to the lower line of your panties or briefs) and the pressure is directed towards the belly (Fig. 3-4)



Fig 3.4

Circles from the inguinal area on the affected side to the inguinal lymph nodes on the other side (in several placements). The pressure is directed to the inguinal lymph nodes on the unaffected side (Fig. 3-5)



Fig 3.5

Abdominal breathing: place both hands flat on your belly and inhale against your hands. The hands follow the belly while you exhale; at the end of the exhalation, both hands press downward and upward (into the thorax). Repeat 5 times (Fig. 3-6, 3-7)



Fig 3.6



Fig 3.7

Note:

Discuss possible contraindications with your therapist

Leg

Soft strokes with both flat hands (effleurage) covering the entire leg, beginning at the ankles (or the knee) and ending on the side of the waist (Fig. 3-8)



Fig 3.8

Circles covering the outside of the thigh and the hip in several placements. The pressure is directed towards the body (Fig. 3-9)



Fig 3.9

Circles with both flat hands from the inside to the outside of the thigh. Work the entire thigh from the top down to the knee with this technique. The pressure is directed towards the outside of the thigh (Fig. 3-10)



Fig 3.10

Circles with the flat fingers of both hands behind the knee. The pressure is directed towards the thigh (Fig. 3-11)



Fig 3.11

Circles with one or both hands in several placements on the the inside of lower leg, between the knee and the ankle. The pressure is directed towards the thigh (Fig. 3-12, 3-13)



Fig 3.12



Fig 3.13

Circles with the hands lying flat on both sides of the lower leg. The pressure is directed towards the thigh. Several placements between the knee and the ankles (Fig. 3-14)



Fig 3.14

Circles with the fingers of one hand lying flat on the back of the foot. The pressure is directed towards the ankles

Rework your leg. (You may repeat as many of the hand placements as you wish.)

Repeat steps 2, 4 and 6. (You may repeat as many of the hand placements as you wish.)