

Head and neck exercises for lymphoedema treatment

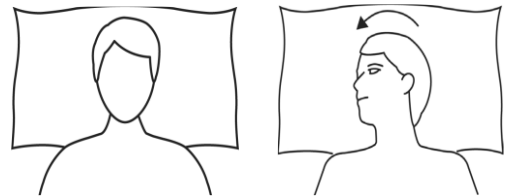
- Exercise is an important part of lymphoedema treatment and management as it encourages lymph to drain, which can help to reduce swelling.
- It is important to maintain a good posture during these exercises. For the seated exercises, make sure you sit tall, facing forwards, with your shoulders relaxed.
- In everyday activities, try to avoid slumped positions especially if using a computer or mobile phone.
- If you have been given a facial garment or soft beaded collar to provide some compression, these should be worn when you are carrying out these exercises.
- These exercises should not cause pain, but you may feel a gentle stretch. Work within the limits that are comfortable for you. If you are finding an exercise painful, stop the exercise and contact your lymphoedema therapist for further advice.

Deep breathing exercises

Before carrying out the following exercises take 5 deep breaths in through your nose and slowly breathe out through your mouth.

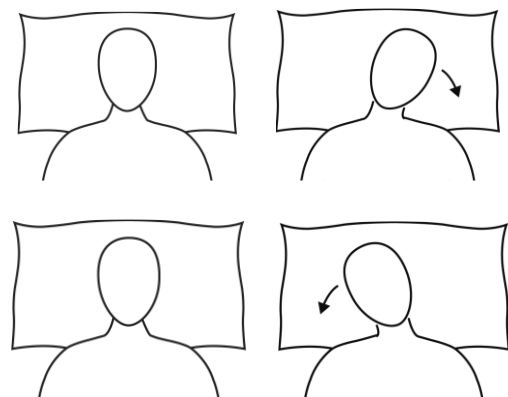
1. Neck rotation

- Slowly turn your head to one side as far as you can
- Hold for a count of 5 and return to the start position
- Repeat to the opposite side
- Repeat 5 times
- To increase the stretch, lightly place your hand on the side of your face to provide gentle pressure.



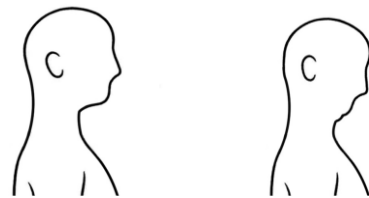
2. Neck side flexion

- Tilt your head to the side bringing your ear nearer your shoulder until you feel a stretch on the opposite side of your neck. Avoid turning your head or lifting your shoulder
- Hold for a count of 5 and return to the start position
- Repeat on the opposite side
- Repeat 5 times
- To increase the stretch, reach your hand towards your toes without moving your body.



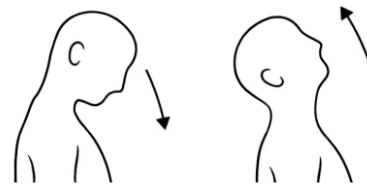
3. Chin tuck

- Try to make a double chin by tucking your chin in
- Keep your neck straight while you do this
- Hold for a count of 5
- Repeat 5 times.



4. Neck flexion and neck extension

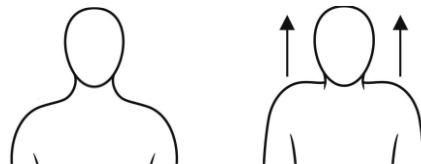
- Whilst sitting, slowly look down, bringing your chin towards your chest
- Return to the start position
- Slowly take your head backwards looking up to the ceiling
- Repeat 5 times.



5. Shoulder exercises

Shoulder shrug

- Whilst sitting, shrug your shoulders up to your ears
- Return to the start position
- Repeat 5-10 times.



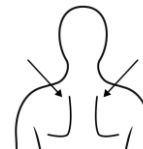
Shoulder circling

- Whilst sitting, roll your shoulders backwards
- Repeat 10 times.



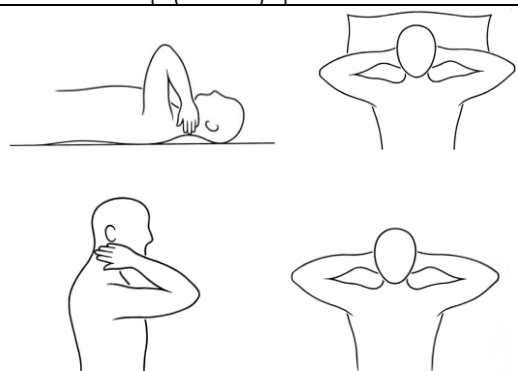
Shoulder blade exercises

- Whilst sitting, pinch your shoulder blades together
- Hold for a count of 5
- Repeat 5 times.



6. Stretching the front of your chest

- Lying down or sitting upright, clasp your hands behind your neck with your elbows pointing towards the ceiling or forwards if sitting
- Slowly move your elbows out to the side until you feel a stretch; if sitting, try not to poke your chin forwards
- Hold for a count of 10 and slowly return to the start position. Repeat twice.



Facial exercises

Changing your facial expression uses a lot of different muscles. Try to do the movements regularly, but without causing muscle fatigue.

- Open and close your mouth, as far as is comfortable / Yawning
- Exaggerate saying vowels (a, e, i, o, u)
- Blowing – slowly and then as if blowing out a candle
- Frowning, including pulling your mouth downwards
- Smiling with and without showing your teeth
- Lift your eyebrows as if expressing surprise
- Purse your lips/pout.

For swelling inside your mouth

Depending on where the swelling is, run your tongue along your cheek and round your lips. Place your hand on the area of swelling to provide some resistance for your tongue to press against.

Contact details

If you have any further questions, please contact the Lymphoedema Service:

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