

Lymphedema

Support Guide

Educational & practical advice about living with Lymphedema

Practical movement, mindset, and self-care tools for cancer survivors
By Rob Steele | Cancer Exercise Specialist | Cancer Survivor | Rehab PT



📷 [fightbackfromcancer](https://www.instagram.com/fightbackfromcancer)

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What is the lymphedema?

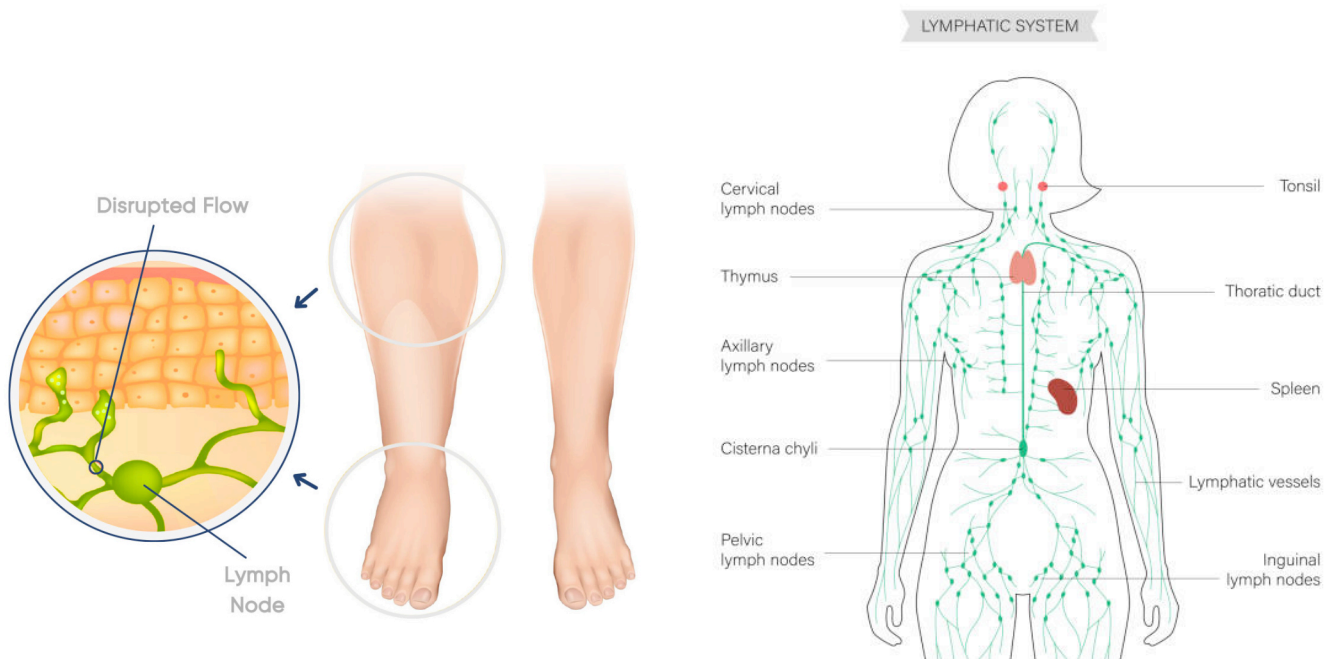
The lymphatic system is a crucial part of your immune and circulatory systems. It helps your body get rid of waste, toxins, and extra fluid by moving a clear fluid called lymph through a network of vessels and lymph nodes.

Think of it as your body's drainage and detox system.

Unlike the bloodstream, the lymphatic system doesn't have a pump like the heart. It relies on movement and muscle contraction to flow properly.

This is why gentle exercise, deep breathing, and even certain movements like stretching or bouncing can help keep it active and effective.

For cancer survivors, especially those who've had lymph nodes removed or affected by treatment, keeping the lymphatic system flowing is essential. It can help reduce swelling (lymphedema), boost energy, and support healing.



How can I manage Lymphedema?

Managing lymphedema is all about supporting the body's natural lymph flow and reducing fluid buildup. Gentle, consistent movement is one of the most powerful tools. Activities like walking, stretching, and guided strength training help activate the muscles that push lymph through the vessels.

Specific lymphatic drainage exercises and breathing techniques can also be used to stimulate flow and reduce swelling, especially when done regularly.

Wearing compression garments, keeping the skin clean and moisturised, and avoiding injury or infection in the affected area are also key parts of daily lymphedema care. It's important to listen to your body and work within your energy levels. For many cancer survivors, managing lymphedema is a long-term process — but with the right tools and support, it's absolutely possible to stay active, reduce discomfort, and feel more in control of your body.

Daily habits

1. Keep Moving:

Gentle walking, stretching, or light strength work boosts circulation

2. Stay Hydrated:

Water helps flush your system (yes, really)

3. Elevate When You Can:

Especially after long periods of standing or sitting

4. Breathe Deeply:

Deep belly breathing supports lymph flow

5. Skin Care Matters:

Keep skin clean and moisturised to prevent infection

Movement is medicine

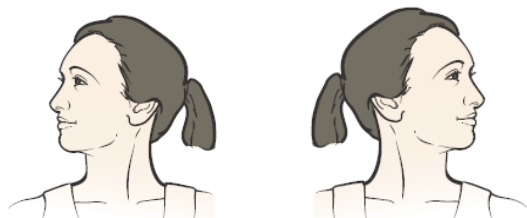
Simple Lymphatic Flow Routine

5-Minute Daily Movement for Lymphedema

Please get clearance from your team before commencing.

Repeat each exercise 10 times.

Neck rotations



Start by looking forward with your shoulders relaxed.
Slowly turn your head to look over your right shoulder.

Slowly go back to the starting position.
Slowly turn your head to look over your left shoulder.

Neck stretches

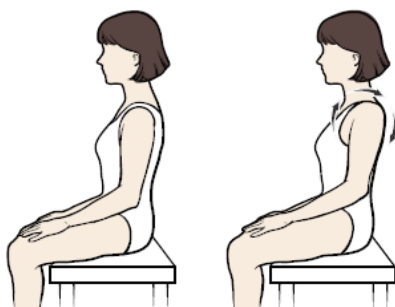


Start by looking forward with your shoulders relaxed.
Slowly tilt your head to bring your left ear to your left shoulder.

Slowly go back to the starting position.
Slowly tilt your head to bring your right ear to your right shoulder.

Remember to only move as far as you can without feeling pain.

Shoulder rolls



Start with your arms relaxed at your sides.
In a circular motion, bring your shoulders forward, up, backward, and down. Try to make the circle as big as you can and move both shoulders at the same time.

If chest tight start with smaller circles then build up.

Shoulder raise



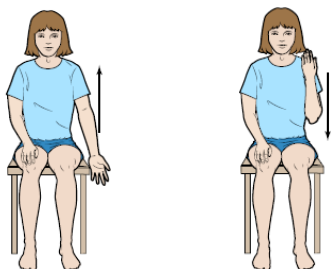
Start with your arms relaxed at your sides.
With your palms facing each other, raise your arms in front of you and up over your head.

If one arm is weaker than the other, clasp your hands together.

Simple Lymphatic Flow Routine

Repeat each exercise 10 times.

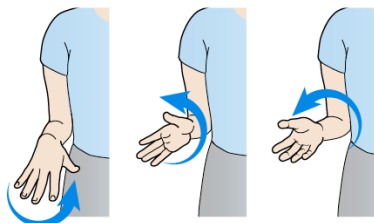
Elbow bends



Start with your arms relaxed at your sides with your elbows straight and palms facing forward.

Bend your arm at your elbow, aiming to touch your shoulder.

Wrist circles

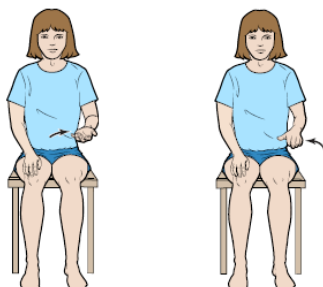


Start with your arms at your sides. Bend your elbows to a 90-degree angle with your palms facing down.

Move your wrists in a circle, aiming to have your palms face the ceiling. Try to keep your forearm still.

Remember to only move as far as you can without feeling pain.

Forearm rotations



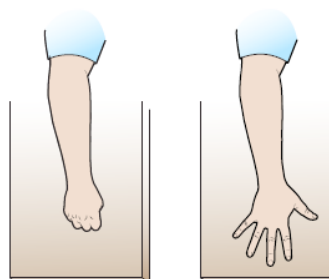
Rest your forearms on your lap with your palms facing down. Lift one arm slightly.

Turn your palm so it's facing upward.

Turn your palm so it's facing down.

Go back to the starting position.

Finger bend



Place your forearms on a flat surface, such as a table or your lap. Make a tight fist, then open your hand and extend your fingers until they're straight.

Remember to relax your fingers before repeating.