Edema Exercises

To Improve Drainage

You will improve your lymph flow by doing a few exercises each day. These exercises are an important part of your home program. They may help you get stronger, too.

Remember:

- Stay in the correct posture while doing these exercises.
- While doing these exercises, wear your compression wraps or garment (if you have them).
☐ MLD (manual lymph drainage)

Place the pads of your fingers above your collarbone. Gently stretch the skin toward the collarbone, and then release. Repeat this slow stretch-and-release for 1 minute.

☐ Neck turn and stretch

Rest your hand on your collarbone. Hold firm as you breathe in. Then, breathe out, turning your head away from your hand.

Do this 2 to 3 times in each direction.

☐ Neck rolls

1. Breathe in as you slowly tilt your head to one side.

2. As you breathe out, slowly roll your head forward to center, to the other side and then up.

3. Breathe in and repeat in the other direction. Do this 2 to 3 times.

Or ...

Breathe in as you slowly turn your head to one side. Let yourself grow taller through the neck as you turn. As you breathe out, slowly turn the head back to center. Do this 2 to 3 times in each direction.
☐ **Breath work**

Lie face up, with your knees bent and your feet on the floor or bed. Your feet should be hip-width apart.

1. Breathe in through your nose. Your belly should rise more than your ribs. Then, breathe out through your mouth. As you do so, pull your belly inward toward the spine.

2. Hold your belly in as you breathe in again. Then, breathe out and relax. Do this 2 to 3 times.

☐ **“W” and dive**

1. While standing, hold your arms out to your sides. Bend your elbows and keep your hands at shoulder level, making a W with your arms and trunk.

2. As you breathe in, stand up straight. Pull your shoulders down and toward the spine—do not shrug your shoulders. You will feel the muscles in your back.

3. Then, breathe out, “diving” your arms forward. This is a small movement—do not raise your shoulders. Do this 2 to 3 times.
Shoulder rolls

1. As you breathe in, gently roll your shoulders forward and up.
2. As you breathe out, roll them back and down. Release.

Do this 2 to 3 times.

Genie arms

Sit on the floor, a chair, the edge of the bed or an exercise ball.

1. Cross your arms “genie style” in front of your chest. Gently pull your shoulder blades toward your feet.
2. As you breathe in, twist to one side, growing taller with your spine as you twist. Do not move your knees or raise your shoulders. Breathe out as you return to center. Do this 2 to 3 times in both directions.

Tip: To increase the stretch, move your arm out in the direction you are turning.

Stepping

Stand with your feet hip-width apart.

1. As you breathe in, slowly raise one leg.
2. As you breathe out, slowly lower that leg.

Do this 2 to 3 times with each leg.
Hip hikes

Stand with your feet hip-width apart.

1. While breathing in, slightly raise one hip up. Your heel will rise, but keep your toes on the floor.

2. While breathing out, slowly lower your hip.

Do this 2 to 3 times on each side.

Windshield wiper

Lie face up with your legs apart.

1. While breathing in, slowly roll your legs in from the hip joints.

2. While breathing out, slowly roll your legs out. Do this 2 to 3 times.

Knee lifts

Sit with your knees bent and hip-width apart.

1. While breathing in, lift your knee so your foot is 2 inches off the floor. At the same time, engage your core muscles. (Pull your belly and ribs in toward your spine.)

2. While breathing out, slowly return the foot to the floor and release your core muscles.

Do this 2 to 3 times on each side.

Tip: If this is too hard, slowly lean toward one knee while breathing in. While breathing out, slowly return to upright position.
- **Bridging**

Lie face up with your knees bent and feet on the floor or bed. Your feet should be hip-width apart. Keep your arms at your sides with the palms down.

Press into your feet, feeling as if you could lift your buttocks up off the floor. Relax. Do this 2 to 3 times.

**Tip:** To make this exercise harder, breathe in as you press into your feet. Using your belly muscles, lift your buttocks 1 inch off the floor. Breathe out as you slowly roll down into starting position.

- **Ankle grips**

Lie face up with your legs hip-width apart. The backs of your heels should rest on the floor.

Quickly pump your feet up and down. As you do, gently grip the floor with your heels. You should feel movement through your entire body.

Do this for 20 seconds, breathing as normal.

- **Pelvic rocking**

Lie face down. Come up on your forearms and elbows.

Gently rock your body from head to toe. (Use your toes to assist you.) You should feel most of the movement at the front of your thighs, pelvis and belly.

Do this for 20 seconds.
Pelvic tilt

Lie face up with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor or bed. Your knees should be hip-width apart.

1. As you breathe in, tuck in your tailbone and flatten your lower back.
2. As you breathe out, push the tailbone out and arch your lower back.

Do this 2 to 3 times.

Puppet arms

Lie face up. Hold a large ball up toward the ceiling.

1. Gently press your palms into the ball. Relax your shoulders. Then, gently pull your shoulders toward your spine.
2. Breathe in as you reach your arms toward the ceiling, using a small movement.
3. Breathe out as you pull your shoulders in toward your spine again.

Do this 2 to 3 times.