

Lymphedema Care Instruction




Created in 2005.04
Reviewed in 2022.11
English version in 2022.11

I. What is lymphedema?

Lymphedema is caused by obstruction of the lymphatic circulation system or venous circulation disorder. Lymphedema can also be caused by diseases, surgical resection, or after radiotherapy. It often occurs in the months or years after treatment, causing chronic, recurrent lymphedema.

Lymphedema may occur on one or both sides of the limb. Early symptoms of lymphedema such as a pit will form while pressing on the skin. After elevating the affected limb for several hours, the edema can be relieved. When the symptoms are more severe, the pit will not appear, and the appearance of the skin is obviously swollen. Without proper care, the lymph will accumulate under the skin for a long time, resulting fibrosis and hardening in the skin.

Staging of Lymphedema :

Stage	Feature	
Stage zero	No obvious symptoms, but the circulation of the lymphatic system might already be effected.	
Stage one (Mild)	When you press the skin, a temporary small pit forms, the swelling can be reduced after lifting the limb for several hours.	
Stage two (Moderate)	The affected area is even more swollen, elevating the limb doesn't help, and pressing the skin does not leave a pit. The skin might become more thickening or hardening.	
Stage three (Severe)	This is the most advanced stage, the affected limb becomes very large and misshapen, the skin forms a leathery wrinkled appearance. At this stage keeping the skin from damage and infection is very important, so the level of discomfort can be lowered.	

II. What should I know if I have lymphedema?

(1) To avoid trauma and/or injury to the affected limb:

- Keep your skin clean. Wash with a mild soap every day.
- Use lotion to keep your skin from getting dry and cracked.
- Avoid pressure on the affected limb and make sure to change position more frequently if the patient needs to stay in bed.

(2) Circulators can be used, please make sure the pressure is under 40mmHg to improve the lymphatic circulation.

(3) When should I discontinue massaging?

Please discontinue massaging if you experience pain, redness, the affected limb becomes warm to the touch, or if there are wounds that aren't healed.

III. Massage tips and points:

(1) The massage starts from the side without edema, and the site with edema begins to massage from near the body, and gradually moves to the end of the limb. Please refer to the lymphedema massage step.

(2) When you perform lymphedema massage, please use gentle pressure against the skin. The skin movements are very light, so the small lymph vessels won't be flattened. Flattened lymph vessels would keep the lymph fluid from draining, and will make lymphedema even worse.

(3) Notes on performing a massage:

3-1. If using a blood circulation machine to promote blood circulation, adjust the pressure according to the patient's tolerance, but the pressure should not be over 40mmHg.

3-2. If the edema site is red, swollen, hot, or painful, please stop the massage. After the medical staff confirms the cause, decide whether to continue the massage or not.

3-3. If there is any wound or exudate in the limb with lymphedema, please inform the medical staff and follow the instructions to cover the wound with a nonstick adhesive dressing to avoid sticking and causing secondary skin tissue damage.

3-4. Please take off part of your clothes before massaging.

(4) If the skin is dry and desquamation, you may apply lotion or diluted essential oil after massage, every step should be performed 20 times.

(5) Elevate the edema limbs properly after massage.

IV. Lymphedema massage step: Take the right leg and right arm edema as an example

(1) Leg Massage: (See Figure 1 below)

1-1. Please take 3 deep breaths to help lymph fluid drain from the lymph vessels.

1-2. Use both of your hands to massage from both sides of the neck to the end of the collar bones, 20 times as a cycle, and remember to perform the massage gently and slowly. (Figure 1 ~ ~ ①).

1-3. Start from the side without lymphedema, slowly massage upwards from the body trunk to the armpit, 20 times as a cycle. (Fig. 1 ~ ~ ②)

1-4. Then massage the side with lymphedema, same direction as the last step. (figure 1 ~ ③).

1-5. Massage from the perineal area upwards till the armpit on the side without lymphedema. (doing 20 times to the top figure 1 ~ ④).

1-6. Massage upwards from the pubic bones (upward 20 times Figure 1-⑤)

1-7. Then do the same direction as step 5. on the side with lymphedema.

(do upwards and downwards for 20 times in Figure 1 ~ ⑥).

1-8. When you are about to massage the swollen lower limb, please divide the area into three parts, start from the upper thigh, the middle of the thigh, the lower thigh. And then the leg (also divide into three parts). Do in all directions 20 times. There is also a lot of lymph nodes behind the knee, don't miss this part. (Figure 1 ~ ~ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫)

1-9-At the end, take 3 deep breaths times.

(2) Hand massage: (see figure 2 below)

2-1. Please take 3 deep breaths to help lymph fluid drain from the lymph vessels.

2-2. Use both of your hands to massage from both sides of the neck to the end of the collar bones, 20 times as a cycle, and remember to perform the massage gently and slowly. (figure 2 ~ ①) .

2-3. Use both of your hands to massage from both sides of the neck to the end of

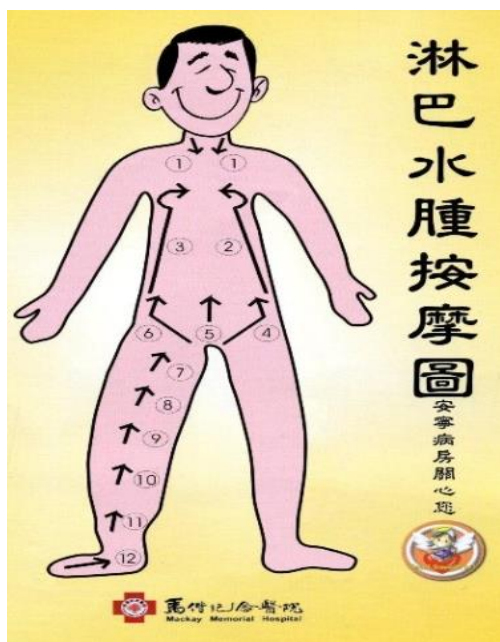
the collar bones, 20 times as a cycle, and remember to perform the massage gently and slowly.(figure 2 ~②)

2-4. Divided the chest into 3 parts, massage the side without edema , then the middle of the chest and at last the side with edema. (figure 2 ~③④⑤)

2-5. Then massage the side with edema, starting from the side of your body trunk, upwards and inwards to the armpit. (following up to 20 times in Figure 2 ~⑥)

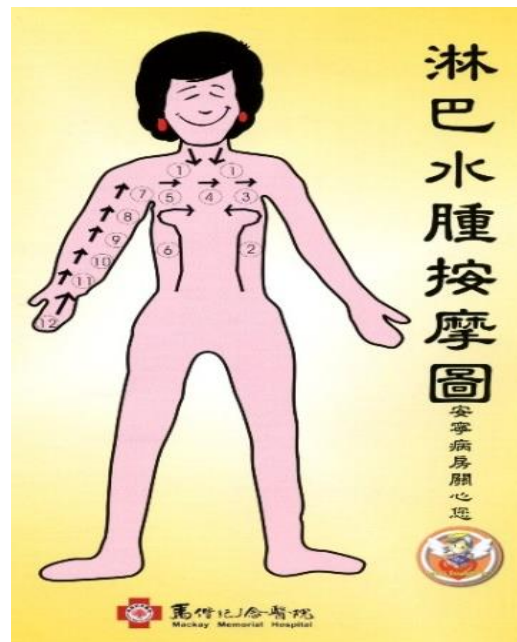
2-6. Massage the arm in all directions. Please divide the upper arm and the forearm into three sections for massage. Start from the upper arm, massage upwards 20 times in all directions, then the middle arm, and the lower arm. (Figure 1 ~⑦⑧⑨⑩⑪⑫)

2-7. At the end, take 3 deep breaths.



(Figure 1)

Lower limb massage







(Figure 2)

Upper limb massage

1. Massaging technique you may use: <https://youtu.be/JJGJDGgwC4>



heading	Feature	Site of action	How to perform
1. Stationary circle motion		The lymph node area	<p>1. Use your fingertips to perform a circling motion on the skin, it helps with improving the lymphatic flow and stimulate the contraction of lymphatic ducts.</p> <p>2. Repeat 5-7 times on each spot.</p>
2. Pumping motion		The extremities	<p>1. The initial action is to position the thumb relative to the other fingers. The wrist is first slightly flexed and offset on the ulnar side. After touching the limb from the thumb side, the palm moves along the limb to offset the radial side and produces a pushing effect.</p> <p>2. While performing this motion, your palm would not be touching the skin.</p>
3. Scooping motion		The extremities	The hand moves spirally from the direction of palm flexion and forearm supination to the direction of palm extension and forearm pronation.
4. Rotary motion		The body trunk	Touch the skin of the patient with the ulnar side of the palm, and move from the offset direction of the ulna side to the offset direction of the radial side. At the same time, move the thumb in the adduction direction to massage the patient in a semi-circular rotating direction

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact us. We are very willing to help. Our contact telephone number: Taipei main branch Hospital: (02)25713760 ; Hsinchu branch: (03)5745098 ; Taitung branch: (089) 310150 ext:311. Time of consultant: 9:00 am~12:00 noon, 2:00 pm~5:00 pm Monday ~ Friday.

May God Bless You