

# Reducing oedema (swelling) of the hand

Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy

## Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients who are experiencing oedema (swelling) of the hand. It explains what you can do to help reduce this.

## Why is my hand swollen?

Some swelling is normal following an injury or surgery, but it is extremely important that the swelling in your finger(s) is reduced as quickly as possible. If the swelling is not reduced quickly then the fluid in the tissues can change into a more thickened gel which is much harder to disperse. This can then cause soft tissue adhesions (internal scar tissue), loss of muscle elasticity & joint stiffness.

## How can I reduce the swelling?

The two most important things you can do to reduce swelling are:

### 1. Elevation.

For this to be effective the hand must be raised above the elbow and the elbow above the shoulder. This can be achieved by resting the hand comfortably on pillows for short periods during the day and at night.

### 2. Exercise.

The amount and type of exercise you are allowed to do will depend on your surgery or injury. However any exercise you do should be forceful, as 'wiggling' the fingers is totally ineffective in reducing swelling.

- The best exercise is to raise both hands above your head and make a firm fist at least 25 times and repeat this every hour.
- It is also very important to exercise your shoulder by placing your hands behind the back of your head and then behind your waist and raising them out away from the sides of the body.

## Is there anything else I can do?

If your therapist advises, you can also massage the affected hand. This will help to reduce the swelling and will also improve the circulation in your hand. It is best carried out after exercise.

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

## Massage for a swollen hand

Use non-scented hand cream or oil, depending on personal preference. This ensures a smooth gliding massage and avoids irritation to the skin.

1. Sit comfortably with your elbows resting on the table and your hand up in the air
2. Apply the oil or cream to the hand or finger and firmly stroke from the tip of the finger down the hand, continuing down the arm
3. The strokes should be long, smooth and firm so that the excess fluid is pushed out of the fingers
4. It is possible to do this yourself, but much better if someone can do the massage for you.

## Are there any side-effects or precautions for these exercises?

Your surgeon and/or therapist has assessed you as being safe to carry out these exercises. However if you experience severe discomfort or pain, or any other new symptoms you are worried about, please stop the exercises and speak to your therapist.

## Who can I contact if I have any concerns or questions about the exercises?

If you have concerns or questions about any aspect of these exercises please speak to your therapist.

Name of therapist:.....

Contact telephone number: .....

Out of hours / emergency contact details:.....

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。