

# Oedema Management: Retrograde Massage

This leaflet explains more about retrograde massage. This technique should be used only by patients who do not have lymphoedema or any underlying lymphatic or vascular conditions. If you have any further questions, please speak to the hand therapist involved in your care.

## What is oedema and why have I got it?

Oedema is a build-up of excess fluid in the body which causes the affected tissue to become swollen. Oedema in the hand can be caused by a variety of conditions or can occur after an injury or surgery to the fingers or hand. After an injury or surgery, your body's natural response is to send fluid to the affected area to start the healing process. With some medical conditions, more generalised oedema can occur.

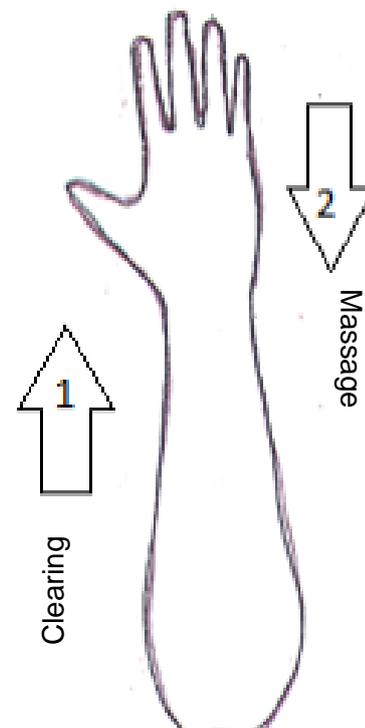
## What is retrograde massage?

Retrograde massage is a type of massage technique that can help to disperse oedema and to encourage blood flow in the hand, which aids in reducing oedema. This, in turn, can help to improve movement in the hand.

## What can I do?

This should be done for at least \_\_\_\_ minutes, \_\_\_\_ times each day

1. Rest your hand on a flat surface e.g., table or armrest. If possible, try to have your hand and lower forearm slightly elevated – this can be achieved by used a pillow or cushion. This will assist with allowing the excess fluid to drain away from the hand.
2. To move the oedema away from your hand you will need to 'clear' a path for the oedema. Start (1) by massaging over the wrist area using gentle 'stroking' movements away from the fingers towards the elbow. Each stroke should be performed slowly using gentle pressure only. Complete five to ten movements.
3. Move onto the area on the back of your hand and undertake the same 'stroking movement, using gentle pressure. Complete this five to ten times.
4. Finally, move onto the fingers, and undertake the same 'stroking' movement. Complete this five to ten times.



5. Once you have completed this 'clearing' technique, gently massage (2) your hand from the fingertips to the base of the hand and then move onto the forearm. Each stroke should be done gently and in the same direction. Complete five to ten movements.
6. Once you have completed the massage, try gently bending and straightening your fingers to encourage further oedema to move away from your hand.

## Precautions

Care must be taken not to disrupt any delicate skin or new scar tissue by applying pressure too deeply with the fingertips. A water-based cream can be used to help the fingers glide across the surface of the hand more smoothly.

## Contact us

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this leaflet, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries contact us on the **treatment enquiries** phone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is \_\_\_\_\_

**Treatment enquiries:** 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only)

**Appointments:** 020 8725 0007

Or scan  
here



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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

## AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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