

Oedema Management: Contrast Bathing

This leaflet provides information about contrast bathing to manage oedema (swelling) in the hand or fingers. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the hand therapist involved in your care.

What is oedema and why have I got it?

Oedema (swelling) is a build-up of excessive 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 contrast bathing?

Contrast bathing is a way of improving the blood supply to the fingers and hand by immersing your hand in a bath of warm water and then cold water. This encourages the blood vessels to open and close, therefore acting as a pump to move fluid away from the area.

What do I do?

For this treatment technique you will need two deep bowls or containers. Fill both containers two thirds full, one with warm tap water, the other with "iced" cold water. Be sure to always **begin with the warm** water and **end with the warm** water to ensure your circulation is not compromised.

Caution: Extra care must be taken if you have injured a nerve. Ensure that the water temperature is neither too hot nor too cold by testing it with your unaffected hand first.

Follow this routine carefully

Place your hand in the **warm** water, stretch out your hand fully and then make a fist in the water. Do this 10 times.



Place your hand in the **iced** water, stretch out your hand fully and then make a fist in the water. Do this 10 times.



Repeat the above sequence five times and make sure that you **end with the warm** water. This routine should be completed ____ times a day.

If you are also completing other treatments such as exercises or massage on the hand, complete these directly after contrast bathing. Reduction in swelling will increase the effectiveness of other treatments you have been prescribed.

Useful sources of information

NHS UK

[Swollen ankles, feet and legs \(oedema\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

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 the team can be contacted on the **treatment enquiries** 'phone number listed below.

Your therapist is _____

Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038

Appointments: 020 8725 0007

Or scan
here



For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

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

Web: 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). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

