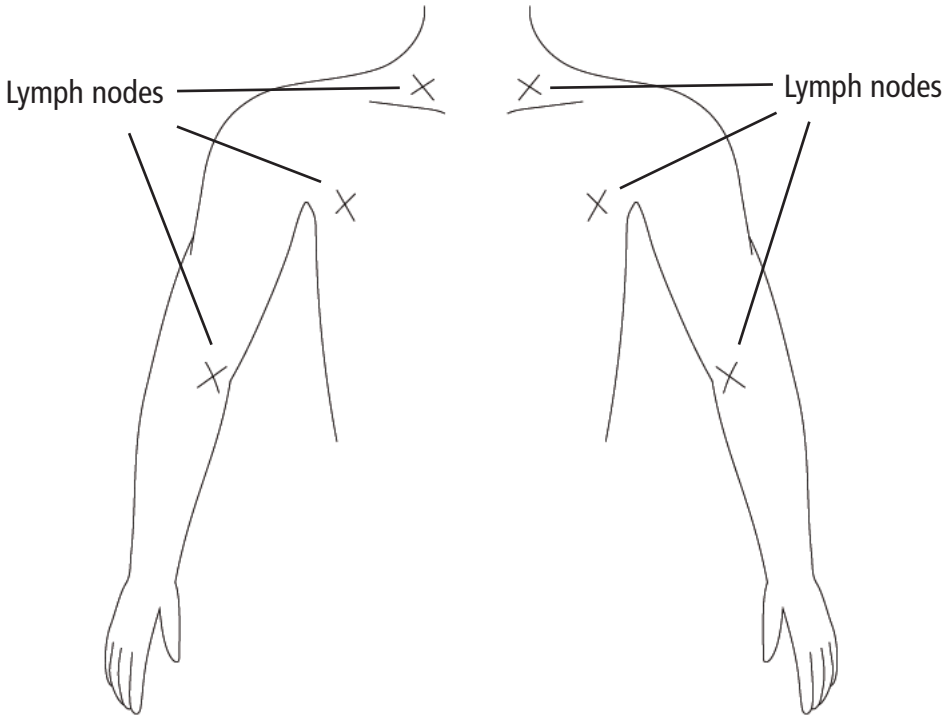
Royal Cornwall Hospitals
NHS Trust

Self-administered treatment for a swollen shoulder, arm or hand



Method

1. Take 4 deep breaths – place hands on centre of chest and take arms out to the sides on the in-breath and back in on the out-breath.
2. Pinch test to the skin.
3. Empty lymph nodes on top of your collar bone using a lymph ball (obtainable from your therapist). Hold the ball in the dip above your collar bone and lift your shoulder towards your head, ear to shoulder. Do this **slowly** (repeat 4 times).
4. Gently massage from the top of your arm towards your collar bone. Use flush stroke if there is no swelling (repeat 4 times) and fill stroke if there is swelling – as many times as needed to reduce swelling.
5. Empty lymph nodes under your arm by placing a lymph ball in your armpit and gently squeezing your elbow down to your waist. Do this **slowly** (repeat 4 times).
6. Gently massage the top of your arm towards your armpit. Use flush stroke if there is no swelling and fill stroke if there is swelling. If there is a lot of swelling it may be helpful to do the top half of the upper arm and then move down to do the lower half, always working up towards your armpit.

7. Empty lymph nodes under your arm as described above in step 5.
8. Gently massage from the top of your arm towards your collar bone (repeat 4 times).
9. When the top of your arm has no swelling, move to the lower part of the arm.
10. Empty the nodes in your elbow crease – with the opposite hand placed above the inside of your elbow on your bicep muscle, slowly bend your affected arm onto the opposite hand. Do this **slowly** (repeat 4 times).
11. Gently massage your lower arm towards the elbow. Use flush stroke if there is no swelling and fill stroke if there is swelling. If there is a lot of swelling it may be helpful to do the top half of your lower arm and then move down to do the lower half, always working up towards your elbow.
12. Empty the nodes in your elbow crease (see step 10).
13. Gently massage the top of your arm towards your armpit (see step 6).
14. Empty lymph nodes under your arm (see step 5).
15. Gently massage from the top of your arm towards your collar bone (see step 4).
16. Empty lymph nodes on top of your collar bone (see step 3).
17. If your hand is swollen then massage your hand towards your wrist – you can do your fingers too. You can squeeze a lymph ball in your hand if this is easier – particularly if the palm of the hand is swollen. When your hand is improving then move the fluid up to your elbow as described above.
18. Empty the nodes in your elbow crease (see step 10).
19. Gently massage the top of your arm towards your armpit (see step 6).
20. Empty lymph nodes under your arm (see step 5).
21. Gently massage from the top of your arm towards your collar bone. (see step 4).
22. Empty lymph nodes on top of your collar bone (see step 3).

Emptying lymph nodes as often as possible throughout the massage is important.

Massage can be done over clothing but 'skin to skin' is always best. Try to massage at least 4 times daily to start (6 would be better). This can then be reduced as your arm improves.

Contact us

If you have any questions please contact:

Lymphoedema Clinic

Mon – Fri 8am – 4pm
Tel 01872 252885 or 252601
rch-tr.lymphoedema@nhs.net

For further information and support please visit our website:

www.royalcornwall.nhs.uk/services/therapies/occupational-therapy/lymphoedema/

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

RCHT 1965

Printed 11/2022 V1 **Review due 11/2025**