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Practical Exercises for Lymphedema Management

Lymphedema is characterized by chronic swelling, often occurring in the upper and lower extremities, due to damage to the lymphatic system. This condition can arise from various circumstances, such as cancer treatments that involve the removal of or damage to lymph nodes, certain infections, or inherited conditions. It's an ongoing, long-term health issue that requires persistent management.

While there's no cure for lymphedema, it's manageable with a multidisciplinary approach that includes proper skin care, compression garments, manual lymphatic drainage, and exercise. Regular physical activity has been found to significantly help reduce the symptoms of lymphedema and improve the overall quality of life. Here are some recommended practices that can be beneficial:

1. Low-impact Aerobic Exercises

Aerobic exercise is essential to improving overall health and well-being. For individuals with lymphedema, low-impact activities like walking, cycling, and swimming are excellent options. These exercises promote better circulation, and help stimulate the flow of lymph fluid, which can reduce swelling. Start with short sessions and gradually increase your duration and intensity, always paying attention to how your body responds.

2. Strength Training

Strength training is also crucial for managing lymphedema, as it helps to build muscle, which aids in the pumping and draining of lymph fluid. Resistance exercises using light weights can help to promote lymphatic function. The key is to start with light resistance and gradually increase over time, avoiding sudden, heavy lifting. Always wear your compression garment during these exercises, and avoid any activity that causes pain or increases swelling.

3. Yoga and Pilates

Yoga and Pilates can be great forms of activity in managing lymphedema. They combine gentle stretching and strengthening movements, stimulating the lymphatic system and promoting fluid drainage. Positions that elevate the affected limb can be particularly beneficial. Remember to use modifications and props as needed to ensure comfort and safety.

4. Range-of-Motion Exercises

Range-of-motion exercises, such as gentle stretching and movements that take your joints through their full range of motion, can help to improve flexibility and stimulate lymphatic flow. These exercises include shoulder rolls, arm raises, or gentle rotations for arm lymphedema. For leg lymphedema, ankle circles, leg raises, or gentle knee bends can be helpful.

5. Breathing Exercises

Deep, mindful breathing exercises can be beneficial in managing lymphedema. These exercises can aid in relaxation, help to engage the muscles around the lymphatic system, and stimulate lymph fluid circulation.

6. Tai Chi

Tai Chi is a form of exercise that involves slow, controlled movements and deep breathing. It's excellent for improving balance, flexibility, and muscle strength. Moreover, the gentle movements of Tai Chi can stimulate lymph fluid movement and offer significant benefits for those dealing with lymphedema.

Conclusion

Exercise plays a significant role in managing lymphedema. It's important to remember, though, that everyone is different. What works well for one person might work better for another. It's crucial to listen to your body and modify activities as needed. Consult with a healthcare

provider or physical therapist specializing in lymphedema to help design an exercise plan for you.

Remember, the goal is not to push your body to its limits but to maintain a consistent routine that supports lymphatic function and helps manage your symptoms. With proper guidance and perseverance, exercise can be an empowering part of your lymphedema management strategy.



Taking the ACOLS Complete Lymphedema Certification Course?

The Complete Lymphedema Certification Course is an intensive 135-hour certification training for medical professionals to successfully treat and manage lymphedema affecting different parts of the body, as well as other related conditions.

Each course participant will be trained in the four components of Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) and the management of lymphedema affecting a variety of peripheral body parts - upper and lower extremities, head and neck, exterior genitalia, truncal swelling, pediatric lymphedema, post-surgical and post-traumatic swelling, lymphedema caused by chronic venous insufficiencies and other pathologies, lipedema and more. Upon completion of this course participants will be able to differentiate between a variety of peripheral edemas and understand the medical indications and contraindications of CDT. Furthermore the therapist will be able to establish a treatment plan for individuals with chronic extremity lymphedema and other conditions and perform the treatment accordingly. Class topics include the following:

- Anatomy, physiology and pathology of the lymphatic system
- Basic and advanced techniques of MLD and CDT
- Treatment of primary and secondary lymphedema as well as related conditions
- Introduction to the treatment of pediatric lymphedema, head/neck and genital lymphedema
- Lymphedema bandaging techniques for upper and lower extremities
- Decongestive exercises for lymphedema patients
- Measuring techniques for edema (volumetric and circumferential)
- Measuring techniques for compression garments (with certification) - JUZO, Solaris
- Home maintenance and self-treatment for lymphedema patients
- Hygienic skin and nail care for lymphedema
- Indications and contraindications for MLD and CDT
- Billing issues for lymphedema therapy

Students will first complete a 45-hour Home Study Program, followed by the 90-hour class for their live lecture and hands-on instruction. The classroom time is taught over 9 consecutive days. It requires only 5 working days and 2 weekends to complete. For more information [Click Here!](#)