

# Wrapping Your Fingers to Control Lymphedema

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The lymph system helps to get rid of waste products from your cells and helps your body fight infection. Lymphedema can happen when your lymph nodes are unable to drain fluid from your tissues. This can cause swelling in your legs or arms, including your hands and fingers. This guide will show you how to wrap your fingers to control the swelling caused by lymphedema. This wrapping method is called multi-layer, short stretch bandaging. Your physical therapist will show you how to wrap your fingers.

## Supplies:

- Lotion
- Small white bandages

## Here are basic guidelines:

- Your bandages should be wrapped just tight enough to stay in place and feel firm. Bandages should not be too tight or too loose. Bandages that are too tight can cause pain, numbness, or tingling in your fingers or hand. If you have these symptoms, remove your bandages. **Do not** wrap your fingers again until your symptoms are gone.
- **Do not tug on your bandages or stretch them when you wrap your fingers.**
- To protect your skin from irritation and scratches, tuck the end of the bandage under the layered bandage. **Do not** use metal clips or tape.
- Unless told otherwise by your therapist, keep your fingers wrapped for 23 hours a day. You can remove your wrap when you bathe or shower.

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

## Instructions for Wrapping Your Fingers

To prevent dryness, use a low pH lotion on your hand and fingers. Let the lotion soak into your skin before you wrap your fingers. Wrap your fingers after you put on your stockinette, but before you wrap your arm with the fluffy padding. It is important to re-wrap your fingers if the bandages start to slip or feels loose. This can happen as your swelling goes down.

- Use the small white bandage and wrap it around your wrist toward your thumb to secure it into place.
- Next, wrap the bandage around your thumb. Bring the bandage up to your nail bed and then wrap it back down to the base of your thumb. Make sure to overlap half the width of the bandage as you go.



- Wrap the bandage back around your wrist.
- Next, wrap the bandage around your little finger in the same pattern you used to wrap your thumb.



- Wrap the bandage around the rest of your fingers using the same pattern. Remember to wrap the bandage around your wrist before starting the next finger.
- If you have bandage left over after wrapping each finger, wrap it around your wrist and around the base of each finger. This will help hold your bandage in place.
- Wrap the rest of the bandage around the palm of your hand. Tuck the end of the bandage under the layered bandage to hold it in place.

