Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) - Breast Home Program

Here are instructions on how to do manual lymphatic drainage to help remove swelling from your breast.

Things to know about MLD

- Use only gentle pressure, just enough to see your skin move.
- Move the skin in half circles ("rainbow" shape strokes) then let the skin return to the starting position.
- MLD should not be painful.
- Do not rub your skin red.
- Perform MLD each day.
- MLD should take about 30 minutes.
- Repeat each of the following MLD steps 5 to 10 times.

How to do MLD of your breast

It is important to only do MLD if you have been told to do so by your physical therapist. Your physical therapist will teach you how to do this at home.

1. Abdominal (belly) breathing: Breathe in (inhale) so your belly expands and rises. Breathe out (exhale), to deflate your belly and draw your belly button in towards your spine. Exhale all the way.

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

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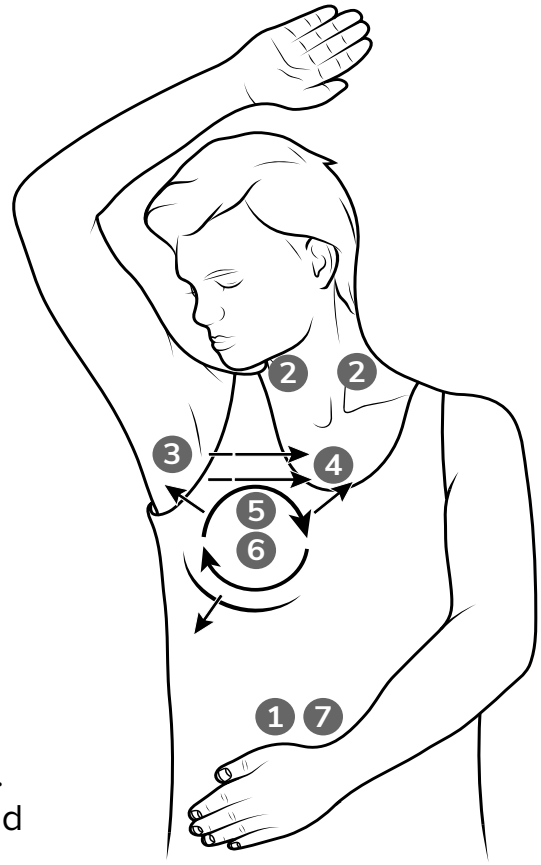
2. Use 3 fingers to gently stretch the skin over the lymph nodes in the hollow just above the collar bone, where your neck and shoulders meet. Stretch the skin in a semi-circle, moving towards your neck. Do this on both sides.
3. Pump the lymph nodes on the affected side of your armpit. To pump the lymph nodes, use the flat surface of your fingers to gently press into your armpit and move the tissue in a circular direction.
4. Use the flat surface of your hand to stretch the skin across your chest. Start from your armpit on the involved side and move to the middle of your chest. If directed, continue to rub across to your uninvolved armpit.



5. Place one hand under your swollen breast and your other hand on top of the breast, creating a “football hold”. Use both hands to move your breast in a circle clockwise 10 times, then counter-clockwise 10 times.
6. Use the flat surface of your hand. Gently stretch the skin from your nipple towards your involved arm pit, then from your nipple towards the middle of your chest. Next, stretch the skin from above your nipple to your collar bone, and then from below your nipple out to the ribs on the side of your body.
7. Take 2 abdominal (belly) breaths to end the manual lymphatic drainage (MLD).
8. Put a low pH lotion (pH level 4 to 6 such as Eucerin) on your breast and the surrounding tissue.
9. Put on any compression foam, chip bag, or garments.