Exercise for Lymphoedema Management and Prevention
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The health benefits of regular exercise or activities are many and should not be ignored. Some of those benefits include weight reduction, increased strength, cardio health and immune function. Exercise may also improve your energy levels, mood and help to combat chronic health conditions.

Extensive research has demonstrated the general exercise or activities can have profound benefits for anybody with lymphoedema or at risk of developing lymphoedema. The direct benefits to your lymphatic system include:

- An increase in your uptake of lymphatic fluid at the initial lymphatics
- An increase in your pump speed of the collecting lymphatics
- Help to mobilizes your joints, which pushes more fluid into the lymphatics
- Increases the muscle action and strength, which assists with moving fluid through your lymphatics system
- Increases your rate of breathe which increases abdominal pressure which helps to increase lymphatic flow

All these physiological changes can greatly assist in the prevention of lymphoedema developing or help with the management of your lymphoedema.

The forms of exercise can be as varied as their benefits, they should be tailored specifically to your fitness levels/health status. Plus your likes, skills and mobility should also be taken into consideration.

General Exercise or activities can be categorized into beneficial/recommended or non-beneficial/not recommended depending on their general effect on the lymphatic system/lymphoedema.

**Beneficial forms of exercise/activities**
These are any form of exercise/activity that involve gentle, flowing, harmonious movement. The exercise should minimize strong impact or involve the risk of injury. Some example are walking, swimming, cycling, water aerobics, hydrotherapy, thai chi, yoga, gymnastics, and dance.

**Specialized Decongestive Exercises and Self-Massage**
These exercises and self-massage sequences have been developed to help increase your lymphatic system function and help reduce swelling from lymphoedema. The exercises and massage are safe, gentle, and easy to perform and are highly recommended for anybody with lymphoedema or at risk of developing lymphoedema.

Non-beneficial forms of exercise/activities
Are those that involve violent impact with hard surfaces, are conducted for long periods, require rapid changes in direction, have a high risk of injury or require restrictive clothing/equipment to be worn. Some examples are, tennis, basketball, netball, long distance running, high/long jump, contact sports such as AFL or rugby, martial arts, and snow skiing and snowboarding due to tight fitting footwear.

Precautions
A few precautions that should be followed whenever you exercise are:

- Before you start exercise and it is also advisable seek professional advice or consult with your Oncologist/Doctor before commencing any new form of exercise to ensure it is safe to do so
- If you wear compression garments these should always be worn (where possible) while you exercise, this will help your lymphatic system function optimally, reduce the risk of injury and reduce the risk of an increase in swelling
- Special decongestive exercises and self-massage should be included in your daily routine or exercise routine
- Your exercise regime should begin with just 5-10 minutes and be increasing very gradually and if possible repeated 2-3 times per day
- If during or after exercises you experience pain/discomfort or you have an increase in swelling you should cease your exercise, rest and if pain and swelling persist seek professional advice before continuing

These simple precautions will help reduce the chance of the exercise/activity causing an adverse effect on your lymphoedema.

Further information on how to manage your lymphoedema can be found at http://www.lymphoedema.org.au

Specialized Decongestive Exercises and Self Massage - “Exercise Your Lymphatics”
The Cancer Care Centre In Unley has piloted their first Decongestive Exercise and self-Massage workshop that is titled “Exercise Your Lymphatics”. The six-week course aims to provide you with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding of:

- Basic anatomy of the lymphatic system
- What is lymphoedema and what are the signs and symptoms of lymphoedema
- Practical precautions to reduce the risk of developing lymphoedema
- What are Beneficial and non beneficial forms of exercise
- How to perform exercises and self massage techniques to help prevent lymphoedema or to help manage your lymphoedema

The workshop has had a great response with seven participants, all of whom have some stage of lymphoedema or are at risk of developing lymphoedema. The participants have been particularly interested in how to prevent lymphoedema developing and how to manage their lymphoedema. A couple of important elements within the workshops for this have been the exercise/self-massage components. The participants
have enthusiastically embraced both the exercises and self massage, they found them very beneficial in managing their lymphoedema and easily included into their daily routines.

Due to the great response and feedback from the participants The Cancer Care Centre will be conducting FIVE “Exercise Your Lymphatics” workshops in 2015. Four of the workshops will run for six weeks, will be held on Thursday afternoons at 1.30pm and each session will last for one hour. Start dates for 2015 are the 12th February, 7th May, 30th July and 22nd October. One workshop will be held over two consecutive Saturday’s with each session lasting for three hours. Dates for those are 11th and 18th of April from 9am – 12pm.

If you would like any further information appropriate exercise or the “Exercise Your lymphatics” workshop please feel free to contact the Cancer Care Centre on 8272 2411, or Richard Roope on 72252411/richard@largsbayhealthandyoga.com

Richard volunteers his services at the Cancer Care Centre; he is a qualified Oncology Massage Therapist, Lymphoedema Therapist, Personal Trainer and “Exercise Your Lymphatics” workshop facilitator.