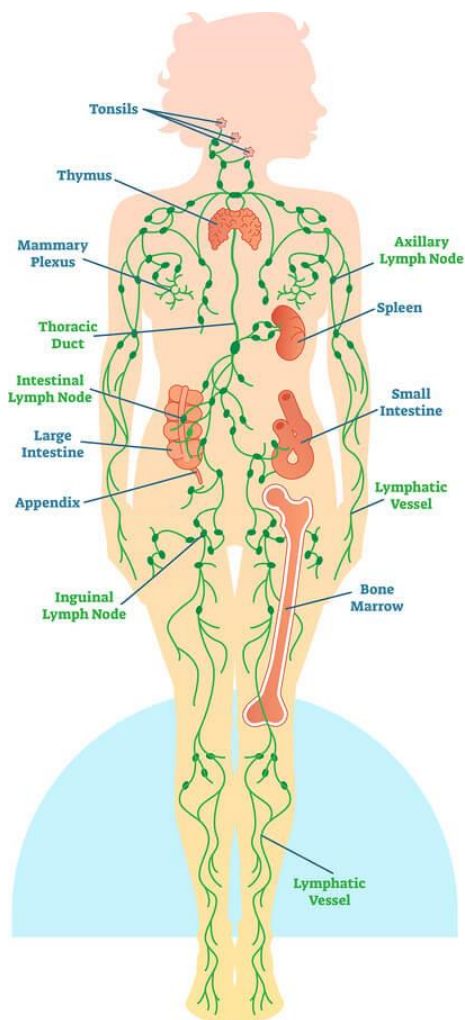




## HOW TO DO LYMPHATIC SELF-MASSAGE ON YOUR FACE, HEAD AND NECK

Your lymphatic system filters and removes extra fluid and waste from your body. It plays an important role in your immune function. This complex system is made up of many lymph nodes that are connected by lymph vessels.

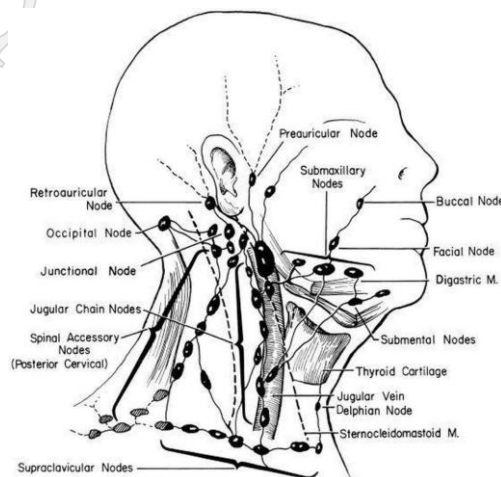
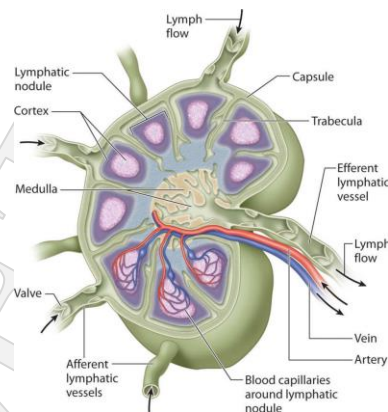


Your lymph nodes are bean-shaped organs that are found all over your body. Large groups or chains of lymph nodes can be found in your neck, under your arms (breast area in women) and in your groin (see the image below).

Surgery or radiation can damage lymph nodes and the lymph vessels. This damage prevents fluid from flowing well and can cause swelling - lymphoedema.

There are over 700 lymph nodes in the body and over 1/3 of them are in the neck.

There is about 15-20 litres of lymph fluid in your body. The fluid “percolates” through the nodes, being purified and ‘boosted’ at every stage, and is generally pumping in one direction - the direction of the heart.





## Lymphatic self-massage and its importance

Lymphatic self-massage is a very gentle form of massage where the skin is gently stretched and released along lymph pathways. Lymphatic self-massage helps move extra fluid from swollen areas damaged by surgery or for example, cancer treatment. This extra fluid can be moved into an area where the lymph nodes are working well.

Lymphatic self-massage can help move extra fluid away from areas of your face and neck that have had various treatments.

Lymphatic self-massage can help to move extra fluid to lymph vessels and lymph nodes in areas of your face or neck not affected by treatment, as well as to lymph vessels and lymph nodes in your underarm / axillary areas.

### **AVOID:**

- Do not strain your shoulders, neck, arms, or hands
- Do not self-massage in a way that causes any pain
- Do not continue self-massage if it is causing you pain
- Do not self-massage if you have an infection in that area
  - Infections can occur in your head, neck, or face where your lymph nodes have been removed or you have had radiation.
  - Signs of an infection may include:
    - Swelling and redness of the skin. This redness can quickly spread.
    - Pain or soreness in your head, face, or neck where you had treatment.
    - Warm or hot feeling in your head, face, or neck where you had treatment.
    - Fever or chills.
    - Feeling unwell.
  - NOTE: If you have had a recent infection, only start self-massage again when you have finished any of your prescription medication (eg: antibiotics – if you had a serious bacterial infection)



## How to do lymphatic self-massage

- Keep your hands soft and relaxed and use a light pressure on your skin. The pressure should be just enough to gently stretch the skin. Only stretch the skin as far as it can go naturally without causing pain. Release the pressure and let your skin come back as it was. If you can feel your muscles under your skin, you are pressing too hard.
- Use the flat part of your fingers (the little pads) and hands instead of your fingertips only. Your palms allow more contact with the skin to stimulate (pump) the lymph vessels.
- Massage towards areas of your body that have not been treated (eg: cancer radiation) such as your chest and underarms.
- Make sure you are in a comfortable position. You can self-massage while sitting, standing, or lying down. Choose a position that is most comfortable for you.
- Massage when you are comfortably warm or when you are in a nice, warm room. If your muscles are warm, they are more flexible.
- Do self-massage regularly. You can use self-massage as time to relax, breathe, and take care of yourself.

Below are the steps for doing a lymphatic self-massage.

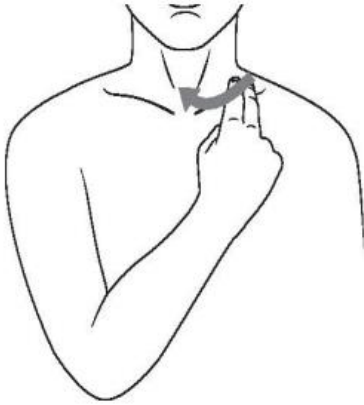
Follow the instructions closely.

Talk to your Naturopath or Therapist if you have any questions.

| <b>Deep Breathing</b>   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <p>Deep breathing is an important part of your self-care, and it works like a pump in your body.</p> <p>This pump helps the lymph nodes and vessels move fluid.</p> <p>You can practice deep breathing at any time!</p> <p>Read more on Dr Adele's website:<br/><a href="#">BREATHING TECHNIQUES</a></p> |
| <p><b>What to do:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Place the palms of both hands on your stomach.</li><li>• Take a deep breathe in through your nose until your stomach pushes against your hands.</li><li>• Breathe out slowly through pursed lips (like you are blowing out candles). Then let your stomach go flat.</li><li>• Repeat 5 times. Take a short rest between each breath so you do not feel dizzy.</li></ul> |  |



### Stretch and release the skin at the front of your neck



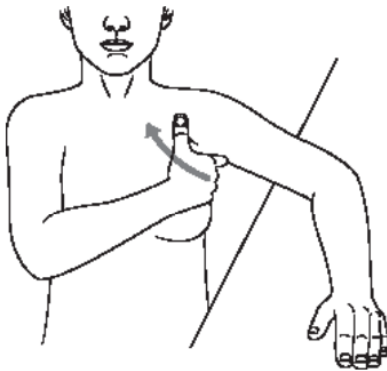
This motion helps lymph fluid drain back to your heart.

You can massage one side at a time or both sides at the same time. You may find it easier to cross your hands if you are doing both at the same time.

#### What to do:

- Place the flat pads of your 2nd and 3rd fingers on either side of your neck just above your collarbone.
- Massage down and inwards toward your collarbone. Always keep your fingers above your collarbone.
- Start massage on the area of your neck that is close to your shoulder and gently stretch the skin towards the middle of your neck.
- Gently stretch the skin just as far as it goes without pain. Then let go of the skin.
- This massage will look like 2 letter "J"s facing one another.
- Repeat 10–15 times on each side.

### Prepare your underarm lymph nodes



This prepares the lymph vessels and nodes under your arm to take in lymph fluid from your face and neck.

Place your arm in a comfortable position. Your arm should be slightly raised and supported.

You may want to place your arm on an armrest or table for comfort.

#### What to do:

- Place your palm of your opposite hand against your underarm.
- Gently pull up and in toward your body, then release. Pause for a moment and then start again. Repeat 10–15 times
- Do the same pumping on your other underarm. Repeat 10–15 times.



### Stretch & release the skin from chest to underarm



Place your hand on your collarbone.  
Move your hand down your chest in half circles toward your underarm.  
Massage your chest to help reduce swelling.  
This massage will move the lymph fluid from your neck and chest to your underarm lymph vessels and nodes.

#### What to do:

- Place your hand over your collar bone
- Gently stretch the skin (not muscles) down your chest and towards your underarm.
- Then let go of the skin. Pause for a moment.
- Now repeat this massage stroke as you gradually move your hand down your chest towards your underarm.

Repeat this massage 10–15 times.

### Stretch & release the skin from the front of the neck to the chest



Massage the front of your neck to help reduce swelling.  
This massage will move the lymph fluid from your neck to your chest.  
Place your hand on the front of your neck where you have swelling.  
Move your hand down your neck towards your collar bone and chest.

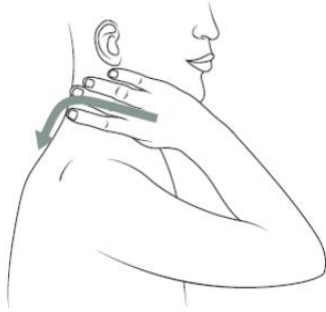
#### What to do:

- Place your hand over the swelling at the front of your neck
- Gently stretch the skin (not muscles) towards your collarbone. Then let go of the skin.
- Pause for a moment.
- Now repeat this massage stroke as you gradually move your hand past your collar bone and down your chest.
- Repeat this massage 10–15 times.

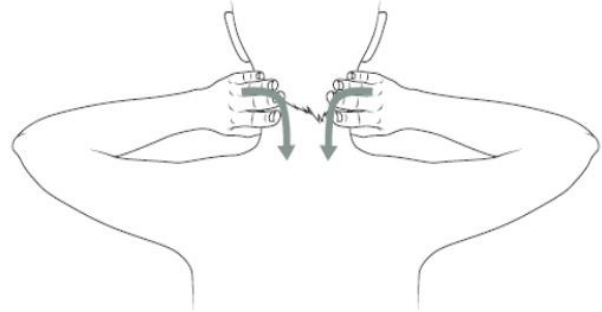
**Do not massage both sides at once if you have had radiation.**



### Stretch and release the skin of your neck (side and back) *(same as above)*



- Gently stretch the skin away from your face and down. Then release.
- Massage your neck and side of the face in a slow and gentle way.
- Repeat 10–15 times.



- Place the palms of your hands on the back of your neck, just below your hairline.
- Stretch the skin towards your spine and then down towards your back.
- Repeat 10–15 times.

If your skin and swollen tissue in your neck or face feels hard, ask your Naturopath or Therapist to show you gentle kneading techniques to help soften the firm tissue.

EXAMPLE:

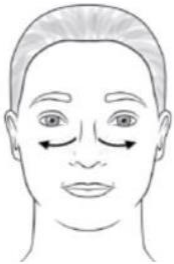
- Gently place the pads of your fingers on the tissue or skin that feels firm or hard.
- Gently press down with the pads of your fingers and let go.
- As you release the pressure, move your fingers down slightly.
- Repeat 10–15 times in one area. Move to another area and repeat.



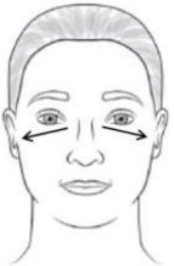
### Massage for face swelling



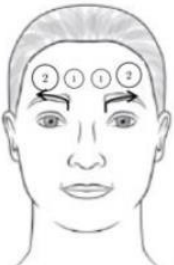
Stroke above and below your lips finishing in front of your ears where your side-burns are.



Stroke from bridge of nose outwards across your cheeks finishing in front of your ears. Start at the tip of your nose.

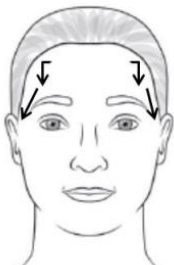


As above working upwards towards your eyes, being careful not to press too hard around the eye area.



#### Peri-auricular lymph nodes

Lightly pinch the eyebrows, starting from the inner brow moving outwards to the outer eyebrows to facilitate lymphatic drainage towards the peri-auricular lymph nodes in front of your ears.



Stretch the skin from the outer forehead, working down to your side-burns.

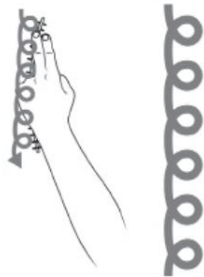


### Massaging a scar

Zigzag motion



Circle motion



Do not massage a scar until at least 3 weeks after surgery.  
Do not massage until all staples and clips have been removed.  
Do not use oil while doing the scar massage.

Your scar may feel very sensitive, tight or itchy.  
Scar massage will help reduce these feelings.  
This massage helps soften the scar and allows better blood flow to the area.  
Scar massage should always be pain-free.  
You can apply any lotions or oils **after** the massage.

#### What to do:

- Place the palm of your hand over the scar.
- Move up and down in a zigzag pattern or circle pattern along the scar. (See pictures above)
- Apply firm but gentle pressure while moving along the scar. Try to move the skin.
- If possible, gently lift the skin along the scar. Repeat 5 or 6 times **on** the scar.
- Now place your fingertips just **above** the scar.
  - Gently stretch the skin away from the scar and release. Repeat 5 times.
- Place your fingertips **below** the scar.
  - Gently stretch the skin away from the scar. Then release the skin. Repeat 5 times.

Try different ways to make self-massage a part of your routine

EG: while you are watching TV or having a shower so it does not take time away from your day.

Make self-massage a time for yourself - make it a part of your routine for relaxing and your self-care.

#### REFERENCES:

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3. NHS - West Suffolk - Patient information: How to do self-lymphatic massage on your head and neck
4. Gabi Day - Bright Body: How To Do Lymphatic Drainage: Face & Neck (with Video Tutorials)
5. Elea Carey. Healthline website: How to Perform Lymphatic Drainage Massage
6. One River Massage Therapy: Self-Manual Lymphatic Drainage - Head and Neck