

Self-care Goals

Educate the client about proper self-care and preventative edema strategies where appropriate.

Self-care Plan

- ☞ Hydrotherapy is chosen that is appropriate for the stage of healing.
- ☞ Self-massage is very helpful. The client is instructed to comfortably elevate the affected area and to use nodal pumping, light unidirectional effleurage and stroking. The client should clearly understand that pressure is light, unidirectional and towards the heart, starting proximally and working distally. The client is also made aware that only the limb proximal to the edema is treated to avoid the bottleneck effect.
- ☞ If the edema is local and chronic and is due to proximal scarring and fascial restrictions, careful skin rolling over the scar tissue can be done prior to elevation and drainage.
- ☞ Diaphragmatic breathing is encouraged to aid in lymphatic return.
- ☞ Remedial exercise is dependent on the stage of healing and the severity of the injury.
- ☞ In the acute and subacute stages, the client is asked to perform pain-free active free range of motion with the distal and proximal joints, and pain-free isometrics in the edematous tissue.
- ☞ In addition to the above, in the late subacute and chronic stage for lower limb edema, **Buerger's exercise** may help to temporarily increase circulation and lymphatic return in the lower limbs. The client lies supine in bed with the legs flexed at the hips to 45 degrees and supported in this position with pillows until the skin blanches. This may take up to two minutes. The client then sits up and allows the feet to hang over the edge of the bed for three minutes or until the skin congests. Next, the client lies flat until circulation in the legs is normal. This cycle is repeated four or five times, three times per day (*Kisner, Colby, 1990*).
- ☞ Clients with lymphedema, especially of the upper limb, should be encouraged to perform moderate active free range of motion exercises without overexercising. Isometric resisted exercises are also indicated (*Stillwell, 1969*).
- ☞ Clients with lymphedema may also be referred to a manual lymphatic drainage specialist for treatment such as someone trained and certified in Vodder's Manual Lymph Drainage and Combined Decongestive Therapy.