

How to wrap/bandage your arm to decrease lymphatic swelling

1. Assemble Materials & apply lotion

PER ARM:

- 1-2 10 cm short stretch bandages
- 1 8 cm short stretch bandage
- 1 6 cm short stretch bandage
- 1 roll of foam skin protection
- Gauze
- Paper tape
- Lotion



3. Wrap gauze loosely around wrist



4. Spread fingers, individually wrap each finger starting with thumb, begin near fingertips, work toward base of finger



5. After wrapping each finger, return to wrist to "anchor"

Keep tension loose at the wrist, slight tension around fingers



6. Use foam to pad the arm before putting on the bandages. Start with putting thumb through the hole in the foam. As you wrap up the arm (hand toward shoulder) overlap the foam at each turn by 50%. No tension on the foam, as this layer is for skin protection, not compression.



Optional:
Add a liner to decrease itching



Foam layer complete



7. Begin with 6 cm bandage at the wrist, make 1 complete turn around wrist.
Fingers spread when bandaging hand



8. Bring 6 cm bandage over the back of hand and cover all of the hand and knuckles. Continue in a "figure 8" style around the wrist and hand moving toward forearm.



9. Continue using circular wrapping up the arm, with a 50% overlap from layer to layer.



10. Start the second bandage (8 cm) at the wrist, use circular turns toward the forearm, each turn should overlap the previous by 50%. **Make a fist** when bandaging the forearm.



11. When bandaging the elbow area, keep elbow **slightly bent**, bandage this area in a "figure 8" pattern, then return to circular pattern after clearing the elbow.



12. Begin the 3rd bandage below the elbow, overlapping the previous bandage. A "figure 8" pattern over the elbow, then using a circular pattern once elbow area is cleared. *a 4th bandage may be required*



Complete bandaging with gauze on fingers



Complete bandaging with compression glove on hand/fingers

Bandages should not sit directly on skin, foam and liner should be visible at the top of the bandaged area.

Evidence based research on lymphedema related to breast cancer:

"More than one in five patients who undergo treatment for breast cancer will develop breast cancer-related lymphedema (BCRL). BCRL can occur as a result of breast cancer surgery and/or radiation therapy. BCRL can negatively impact comfort, function, and quality of life. Complex decongestive therapy CDT is a fourfold conservative treatment which includes manual lymph drainage (MLD), compression therapy (consisting of compression bandages, compression sleeves, or other types of compression garments), skin care, and lymph-reducing exercises. Phase 1 of CDT is to reduce swelling; Phase 2 is to maintain the reduced swelling" (Ezzo et al., 2015).

References

Ezzo, J., Manheimer, E., McNeely, M. L., Howell, D. M., Weiss, R., Johansson, K. I., Bao, T., Bily, L., Tuppo, C. M., Williams, A. F., & Karadibak, D. (2015). Manual lymphatic drainage for lymphedema following breast cancer treatment. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.cd003475.pub2>

Self bandaging of the arms - patient information: Lymphoedema Network Northern Ireland (LNNI). Self Bandaging of the Arms - Patient Information | Lymphoedema Network Northern Ireland (LNNI). (2011, April 11). <https://www.lnni.org/content/self-bandaging-arms-patient-information>