



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Your Guide to Skin Care

Issued by the Lymphoedema / Breast Team

**This leaflet is to give you information about skin care. It will explain why you have been advised to look after your skin and offers general advice.**

**Looking after your skin is part of the treatment package for your lymphoedema which also includes exercises, wearing a compression sleeve and simple lymph drainage massage.**

## **Cleansing the Skin**

Wash your limb carefully paying particular attention to any skin folds and skin between the fingers. Ensure you dry the area well by patting the skin rather than rubbing.

## **Why is it important to look after my skin?**

When you have lymphoedema in the limb the skin can become very dry and cracked causing discomfort. If the skin becomes dry it can cause an infection known as **Cellulitis**.

Any break or injury to the skin may allow an infection to occur. **If this happens the arm may suddenly feel hot, red, more swollen and painful.**

**You may also feel generally unwell. The infection can be treated with a course of antibiotics – you will need to see your doctor immediately.**

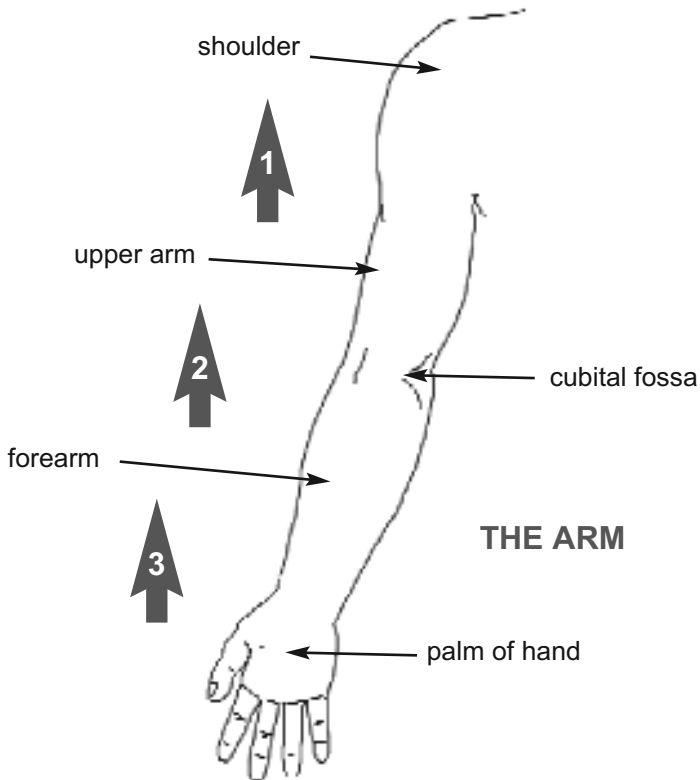
It is important that if you have an infection you must not wear your sleeve and rest the arm as much as possible. Repeated infections cause further damage to the lymphatics resulting in worse swelling. It is important to look after your skin to reduce the risk of infection.

## General Skin Care Advice

- Protect your hands when doing jobs like gardening and washing up – wear gloves.
- Use hand cream regularly. Apply an unperfumed moisturising cream that can be prescribed by a GP after every wash to help keep the skin supple and prevent it becoming dry and cracked. Avoid creams that contain Lanolin as your skin can become sensitive.
- Treat even small cuts and grazes promptly – clean well and apply antiseptic. If the area becomes red, hot, and more swollen, notify your GP as soon as possible.
- Keep the skin on the swollen arm protected from the sun and sunburn – use sunscreen and insect repellent.
- Use an electric razor when shaving underarms or depilatory cream e.g. Veet.
- Take care when cutting nails – it is best to use nail clippers. Never push back or cut cuticles – use cuticle remover instead.
- Always use a thimble when sewing.
- **Do not** have blood samples or blood pressure taken on the swollen arm. If you have had a bilateral mastectomy you can have blood pressure and blood samples taken from your legs.
- **Do not** have acupuncture or injections on the affected arm.
- Avoid being scratched especially when playing with pets – wear gloves and long sleeved clothing when handling animals or gardening.

## Application of Skin Moisturising Lotion

- Start applying moisturising lotion at the upper arm and axillary area (1)
- Gradually move down the arm (2 and 3) performing upwards, stroking movements to encourage lymphatic drainage.
- Finish with 1 downward sweep to re-position the hairs on the arm to their downwards direction.



If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact your Breast Care Nurse or Physiotherapist:

**Physiotherapist:**

North Tyneside General Hospital (0191) 293 4064

Wansbeck General Hospital (01670) 564010

## **Support Contact Numbers**

### **Breast Care Nurse**

North Tyneside General Hospital  
(0191) 293 4183

### **Breast Care Nurse**

Wansbeck General Hospital  
(01670) 529319

### **Breast Care Nurse**

Hexham General Hospital  
(01434) 655386

### **Breast Practitioners**

Wansbeck General Hospital  
01670 529636

### **Breast Cancer Care Helpline**

0808 800 6000 or website: [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)

### **Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline**

0845 601 6161 or website: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### **Breast Care Campaign**

[www.breastcare.co.uk](http://www.breastcare.co.uk)

### **British Lymphology Society (BLS)**

[www.thebls.com](http://www.thebls.com)

### **Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN)**

[www.lymphoedema.org](http://www.lymphoedema.org)

## **Alternative Formats**

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## **Other sources of information**

### **NHS 111**

### **NHS Choices**

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### **NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)**

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### **Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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