

a patient's guide

Head and neck exercises for lymphoedema treatment

Patient Information Series PI 78



Mount Vernon
Cancer Centre

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Head and neck exercises for lymphoedema treatment

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Introduction

This exercise guide has been produced to help decrease lymphoedema after your head and neck surgery/radiotherapy.

How can I help reduce lymphoedema?

By doing the exercises in this leaflet you can help reduce lymphoedema by working muscles to encourage drainage.

If you have been given a Hereford collar, wear it while exercising and remove afterwards.

These exercises should not cause pain, but you may feel stretching which is expected.

When should I do the exercises?

It is useful to do the exercises at least daily during your radiotherapy, if you can tolerate this, and for a minimum of six months after radiotherapy.

How often should I do these exercises?

It is useful to do them at least once a day, but not more than five times a day. Each exercise session should not last more than **15 minutes**.

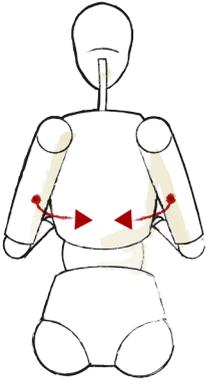
It is important to hold the position, initially for a few seconds aiming to build up to **20 seconds** each time you perform an exercise.

You should spend time repeating the exercises which are difficult for you and ignore the ones which you find very easy.

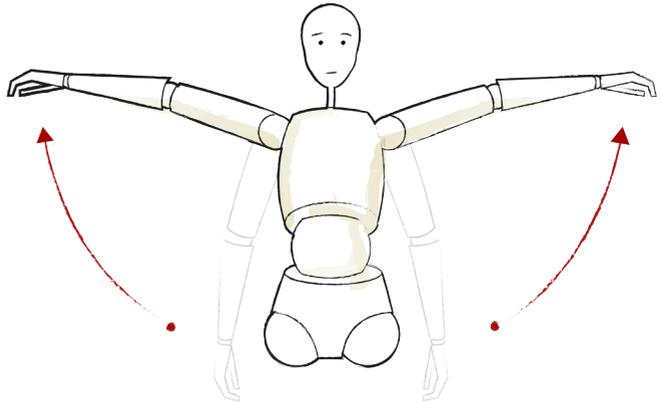
Aim to repeat all exercises **5 times**. Ensure you are not slumped and are in a good position while exercising.

Shoulder exercises

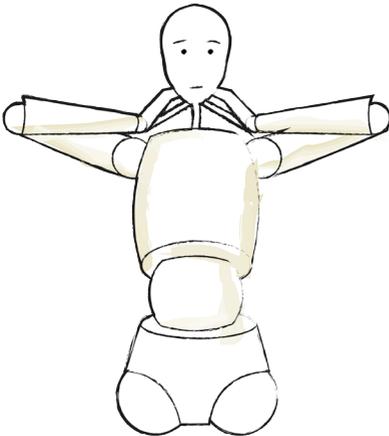
These exercises are useful if you have restricted shoulder movement or oedema in this area.



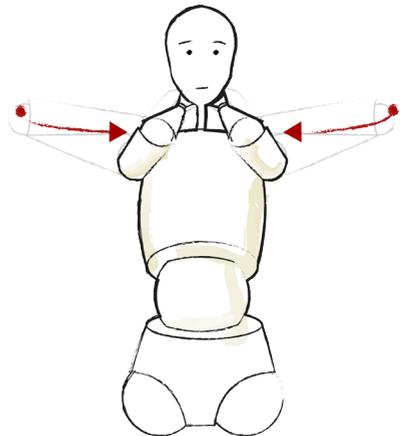
Move your shoulder blades in and out

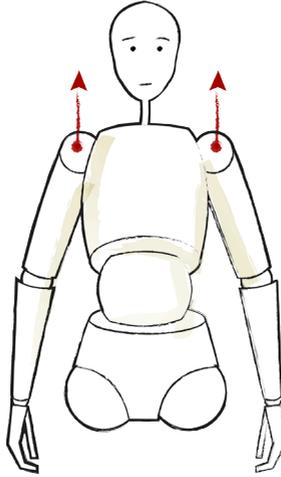


Slowly lift both your arms out sideways and take a deep breath at the same time. Breathe out as you slowly lower your arms

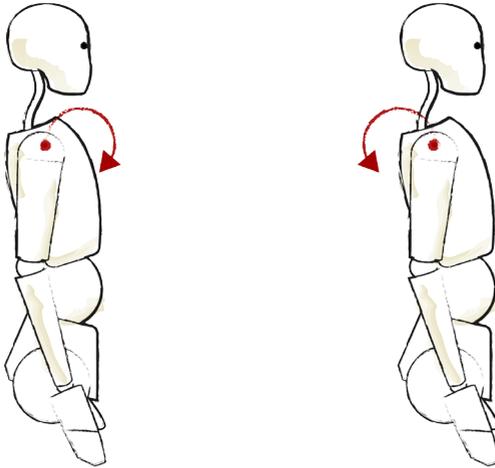


Clasp the back of your neck and bring your elbows together





Shrug your shoulders
up, then down



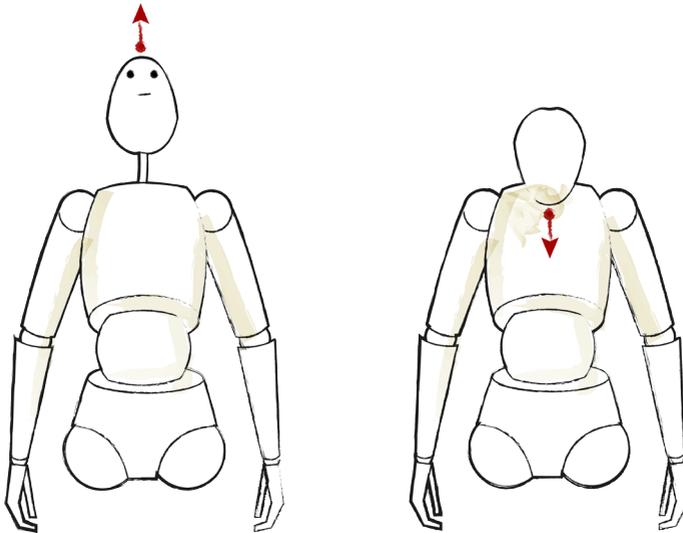
Roll your shoulders forwards in large circles 5 times,
then roll them backwards 5 times
Only your shoulder joints should move

Neck exercises

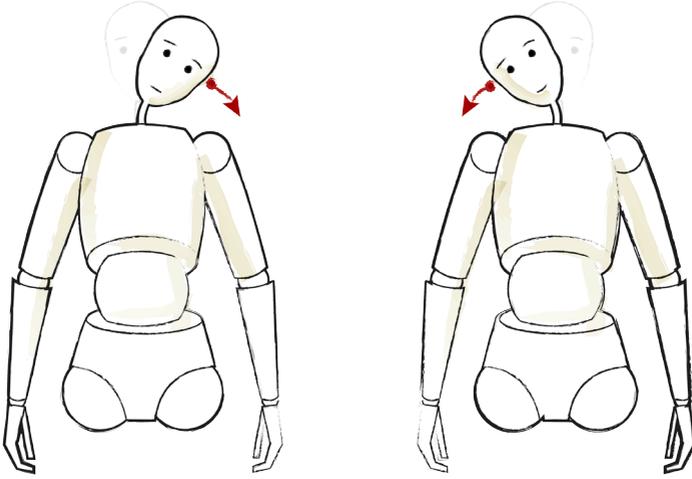
These exercises are useful if you have restricted neck movement and/or neck oedema.

You can carry out these exercises either sitting/standing or laying on the bed with your head on a pillow.

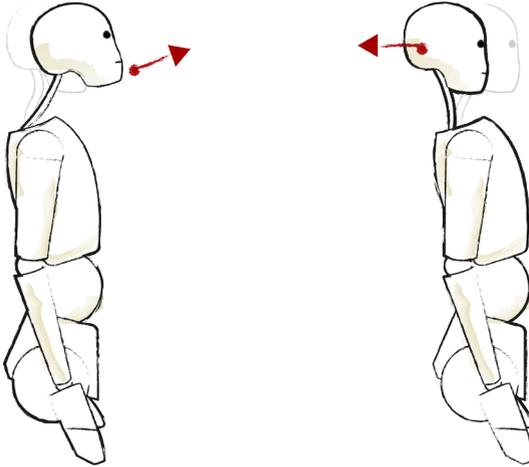
If you can tolerate, you can place your hand on your head when in a turned position to provide gentle pressure and increase the stretch.



Slowly look up, then down, then rest in the centre
Only your head and neck should move

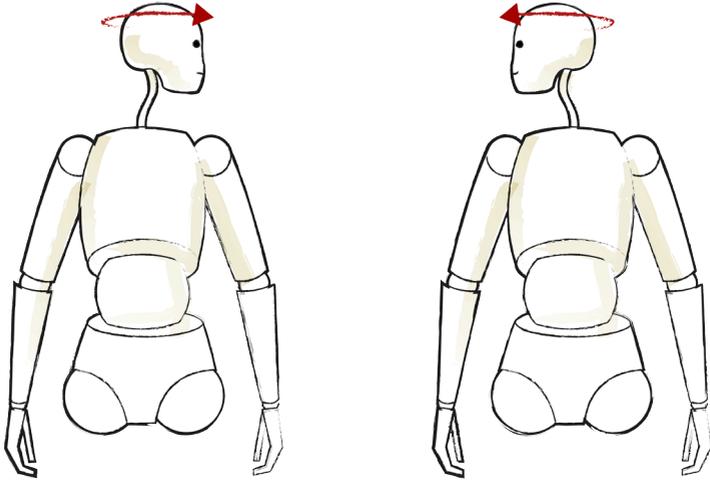


Tilt your head to the right and then the left
Only your head should move



Push your chin out

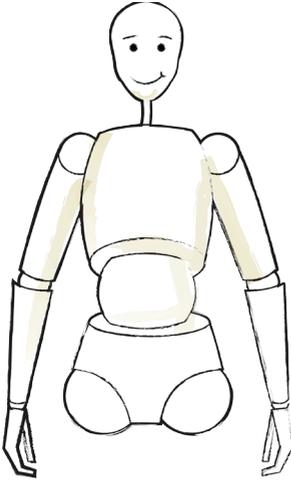
Pull your head and chin in



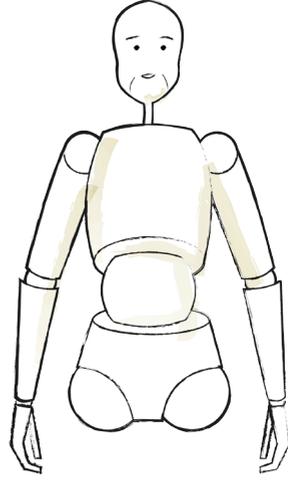
Turn your head to each side keeping your shoulders level
Only your head should move

Face exercises

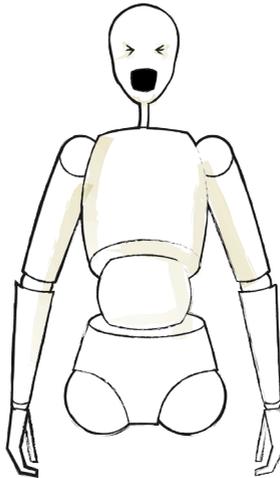
These exercises are useful if you have facial oedema.



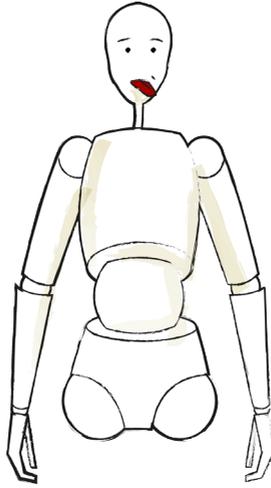
Smile without
showing your teeth



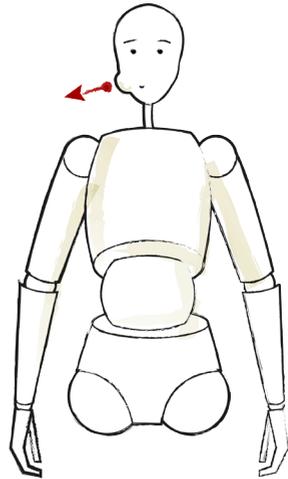
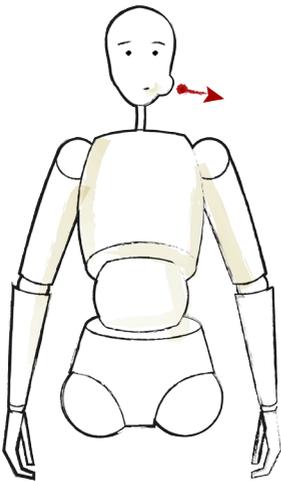
Frown, pushing your
chin down



Yawn



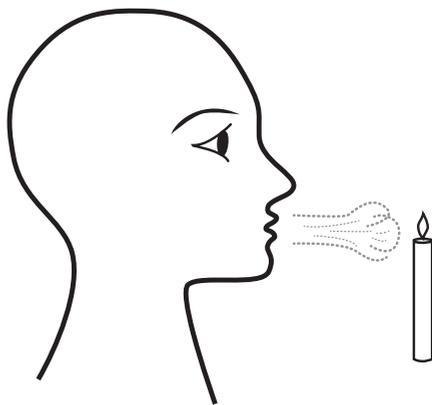
Push your tongue out to the left and then to the right



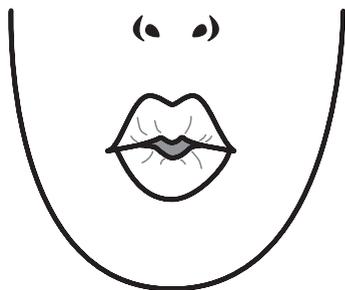
Push your tongue to the left and then to the right inside your cheeks



Exaggerate saying vowels
(A, E, I, O, U)



Blow slowly, as if
blowing out a candle



Purse your lips
and pout



Lift your eyebrows,
as if surprised

This publication has been produced by the Information team at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre. Contributors include health professionals, patients and carers who have expertise and experience in the topics covered by this publication. All our publications are reviewed and updated regularly. If you would like any details of the references used to write this information please contact the Information team on 020 3826 2555.

**Questions or concerns about
cancer and treatment?
Struggling to cope?
Need some support? Need to talk?**

Drop in to the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre
or call the support & information helpline

We will listen to your concerns, answer your questions
and guide you to further information
and services to help you

cancer treatment	practical support
side effects of treatment	headwear workshops
day-to-day living with cancer	exercise
benefits advice	diet and nutrition
counselling	health and wellbeing
someone to talk to	talking to family and friends
emotional support	Look Good Feel Better
complementary therapy	self-help courses
relaxation services	life after cancer

The Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre is situated between the
Cancer Centre and Gate 3 (White Hill)

Opening hours: Monday–Friday 9.30am–4.30pm

020 3826 2555

www.ljmc.org

Supporting people affected by cancer
from diagnosis, through treatment and beyond



Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre

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