



## ***How to manage swelling after your hand injury or surgery*** (1 of 2)

After your injury or recent surgery on your hand, you will experience swelling which is a normal reaction and part of your body's healing process.

However, it is very important that you carefully manage this swelling and prevent anymore from occurring by following these important guidelines. If you do not follow this advice you may cause additional or prolonged swelling which could affect your healing, cause additional pain and limit the movement in your hand.

Please try to incorporate the following advice into your daily routine:

- Keep your hand elevated at all times until guided to stop doing so by your therapist. This can be achieved by holding your hand across your chest at shoulder level. You do not need to use a sling as this can cause neck and shoulder problems. Ideally you should keep your hand up above heart level at all times.
- Use pillows to raise your injured hand so that it is resting above heart level when you are sleeping at night. You can do this either lying flat on your back or on your side. You can also support your arm on pillows when seated, to help keep it elevated. This will prevent 'pooling' of swelling in your hand at night.



- Complete regular 'pumping exercises' every 30 minutes during the day. This involves pumping your whole arm up and down in the air, reaching for the ceiling. You do not need to move your hand whilst doing this. This action helps to improve the drainage of swelling from your hand whilst preventing stiffness in your elbow and shoulder.



If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: [customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk)

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: [www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily](http://www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily) or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

Name: Megan Robson  
Role: Clinical Specialist  
Date written: March 2013  
Last reviewed: Nov 2018  
Review date: Nov 2021  
Version: 1.2  
Code: PI10789

Your therapist will be able to guide you as to when you can start to reduce the amount of time you are elevating your hand. However, should your swelling become more prolonged or start to restrict your ability to complete your hand exercises your therapist may introduce some other techniques to help improve this. They are briefly described below with space for your therapist to write specific instructions on how to complete these tasks. Please do not attempt any of these unless your therapist has specifically asked you to.

## **Compression Products**

Items such as tubi grip, coban wrap or digi compression sleeves can be useful to help apply a light compression over areas of thicker, persistent swelling.

You must be careful to monitor your circulation when using these products by checking the colour of your skin. If you notice that the skin area changes to a dusky purple or mottled colour or you experience any tingling, please remove or loosen the items immediately.

Therapy instructions on use:

## **Active Exercises – Manual Edema Massage**

This is a combined breathing and exercise approach which helps to improve the flow of swelling away from an injured hand. Your therapist will be able to give you an exercise programme to work through at home daily. Please see separate leaflet.

## **Kinesiotaping**

Your therapist may decide to apply a special elastic tape to your hand / arm to help provide a lift to the skin and improve the drainage of your swelling away from your injured hand. You can leave this tape in place for up to 5 days to gain maximum benefit. Your therapist will advise on specific usage.

Therapy instructions on use:

Your therapist will assess your swelling at review appointments and may amend or change your therapy management as appropriate.

Name of therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

