

Further advice

If you are concerned about lymphoedema, please discuss this with your cancer nurse specialist, physiotherapist or surgeon.

If necessary, a referral can be made to a lymphoedema specialist in your local area. Please ask your cancer nurse specialist, physiotherapist or surgeon for more information.

The development of this leaflet has been assisted by information from Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

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Removal of Groin Lymph Nodes

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in alternative languages / formats on request.

如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式
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Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona
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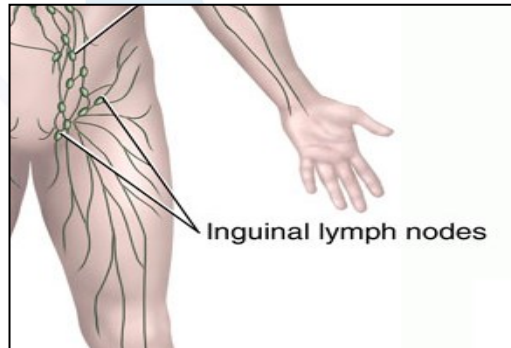
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Introduction

You are having surgery that examines and removes lymph nodes from your groin.

The lymph nodes are part of your lymphatic system. This system is a network of vessels carrying fluid around the body. It takes away waste products from the body's tissues.

It also plays an important role in fighting infections. Lymph nodes act as 'filters' and so can trap bacteria but also cancer cells.



A diagram showing the location of lymph nodes in the groin.

Your operation is performed when it is known or likely that cancerous cells have spread to your lymph system.

You will return from theatre with a tube stitched into the wound attached to a bottle (a drain). This helps to drain any excess fluid from the groin and is a normal result of the operation.

Your surgeon will advise when it is appropriate for the drain to be removed. It can be in place for a few days. Sometimes a nerve in the groin might be affected by the operation. This can cause numbness or a change in feeling in the thigh. This change is often permanent.

Following the operation there are some things that you **should and should not do**.

Lymphoedema. What is it?

The lymph system is a network of vessels carrying fluid around the body. It takes away waste products formed by the body's tissues, plays an important role in fighting infections and produces the body's own antibiotics.

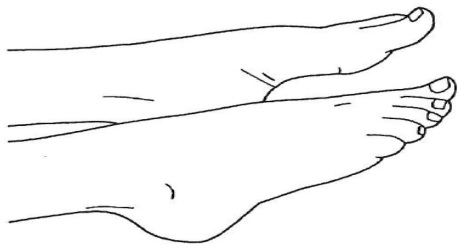
Anyone who has had damage to their lymph system is at risk of developing lymphoedema. This is a chronic swelling caused by an excess of lymph fluid in the tissues. It is a long term condition, meaning that it can be controlled but it cannot be cured. Not all people will go on to develop lymphoedema after removal of lymph nodes.

Symptoms may include:

- Skin may feel stretched, making it difficult to move your leg.
- Heavy/aching feeling in your leg.
- Altered sensations e.g. pins and needles.
- Pain in the affected leg.
- Recurrent skin infections in the affected leg.

Ways to help prevent lymphoedema

- Look after your skin and nails
- Try **not** to wash using very hot or cold water.
- Use moisturiser regularly to prevent dryness of the skin.
- Take precautions to avoid cuts, sunburn or burns to the affected area. Treat cuts and grazes as soon as you can. If you are worried the skin is infected consult your GP promptly.
- Wear long trousers when doing D.I.Y or gardening.
- Take care when removing excess/unwanted hair from the leg. Using a well maintained electric razor is the safest method.
- Elevate and exercise the affected limb when travelling long distances.
- Avoid wearing tight fitting clothes or jewellery that may constrict your leg.



- Bend and straighten your ankles briskly.
- If you keep your knees straight during the exercise it will help to stretch your calf muscles.
- Repeat **5 times** on each foot.

When you are at home

Continue your exercises daily until you can use and move your leg as well as you could before your operation. You may feel an aching around your hip with certain more strenuous activities, but this will lessen as your muscles get stronger.

Driving: You are able to start driving once you feel well, are alert and able to make an **effective** emergency stop without pain. For most people, this takes around **4 weeks** after the operation. Start off with short distances and increase gradually.

It is advisable to check with your insurance company before you restart driving.

Scar massage: When your wound is fully healed, massage on and around the scar with an emollient cream such as E45. Wait to be advised by the nurses before starting this.

Your doctor or physiotherapist will advise when it is ok for you to **return to work** depending on what your work is and your rate of recovery.

If you become unwell at home (general malaise, fever etc), or your groin becomes increasingly red, hot or swollen please seek medical advice.

Care before and after operation

After surgery, should you have nerve damage in your leg, you should take care **not** to rest hot or cold items (e.g. cup of tea/coffee) on the affected thigh as you might not feel if the skin is being damaged by extremes of temperature.

After the operation it is important that you **do not** perform activities that require you to bend your hip too much until your drain is removed. For example, **not** reaching down to your feet.

However, you **should** move your leg so the soft tissues around your hip do not tighten. This leaflet outlines exercises that you **should do** following your operation.

The leaflet also gives you advice about increasing activity levels and how you can reduce the risk of longer term swelling (lymphoedema) in your affected leg.

Your physiotherapist will see you on the ward after your operation. He/she will look at this booklet with you and will be happy to answer any questions you may have; the booklet is only a guide.

Exercises to start in hospital following your operation.

1. Breathing Exercises

Your operation was performed under general anaesthetic. Many people find they bring up phlegm (mucus) for a day or two after a general anaesthetic. This is normal.

However, a general anaesthetic puts you at a higher risk of developing a chest infection.

It is important that you perform the breathing exercises regularly, as shown in this leaflet, once you have woken from your anaesthetic.

Perform them as a cycle **every hour** to open your airways more and help to keep your chest clear of phlegm (mucus).

a. Deep breathing

Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose and fill up your lungs as much as possible. Hold for **3 seconds** and sigh the air out through your mouth. Repeat **3 times** then....

b. Relaxed breathing

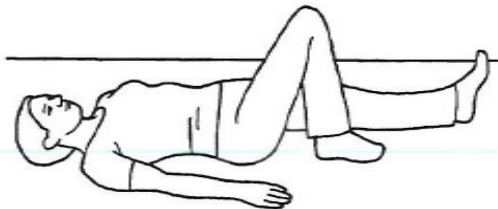
Gently rest your hand on your tummy. Take a gentle breath in through your nose. Your tummy should rise. Sigh the air out of your mouth. Your tummy should fall. Repeat **3 times** then....

c. Huffing/Coughing

Open your mouth widely and force air out as if you were steaming up a mirror. This helps to bring any phlegm (mucus) to the back of your throat. You may then need to cough to clear it. Repeat **3 times**.

2. Leg exercises

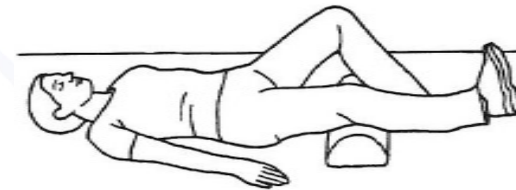
You can start these exercises straight away after your operation. They help the drainage of fluid from your groin, maintain the movement in your joints and strength in your muscles. Aim for **3 sessions** a day. It is advisable to perform the exercises on the unaffected leg as well to ensure it keeps strong and supple.



- Lie on your back.
- Bend and straighten your leg.



- Lie on your back with your legs straight.
- Bend your ankles and push your knees down firmly against the bed.
- Hold for **5 seconds**.
- Repeat **10 times**.



- Lie on your back.
- Bend one leg and put your foot on the bed and put a cushion under the other knee.
- Exercise your straight leg by pulling your foot and toes up, tightening your thigh muscle and straightening the knee (keeping your knee on the cushion).
- Hold for **5 seconds** and repeat **10 times**.



- Lie on your back with one leg bent and the other straight.
- Exercise your straight leg by pulling the toes up, straightening the knee and lifting your heel a few inches off the bed.
- Hold this for **5 seconds** and repeat **5 to 10 times**.