

# Acute Hand Oedema Management

Oedema is swelling that is caused by an increase of fluid underneath your skin. It is a normal part of the healing response of the body after surgery or injury. Excess or prolonged oedema can delay healing and cause increased pain, stiffness and scarring. The following are methods that are effective in reducing oedema that you can do as part of your home program.

## DO

Elevation	<p>For the first week after your injury, always keep your injured hand/arm elevated above the level of your heart. The best results are obtained if your hand is slightly higher than your elbow, which in turn is held slightly higher than your shoulder. Use pillows to position your arm while you are sleeping or sitting.</p> <p>When walking, rest the injured arm on your opposite shoulder, rather than swinging it by your side. Slings should be avoided.</p> <p>Following the first week after your injury or surgery gradually reduce the elevation of your hand to overnight and during waking rest periods. You can gradually start swinging your arm by your side for longer periods of time as tolerated</p>
Muscle pumping exercise	Stretch your fingers out straight, and then make a firm fist while your arm is raised over your head. Repeat this exercise approximately 10 times every 1-2 hours within your pain limits.
Retrograde massage	Massage with light slow strokes beginning over the surface of all fingers and thumb, down through your knuckles, back of hand and gradually moving up your wrist and arm towards your chest.
Cold Pack	Apply cold pack in a towel for 15-20 minutes, every 2 hours over the injury site.

## DON'T

- Carry out activities that aggravate moderate pain as this can cause more oedema.
- Apply heat packs – this will increase blood flow and fluid flow into the injury site and increase oedema
- Place your hand in positions that increase a throbbing sensation in your fingers, hand or arm. (e.g. leaving hand hanging down or swinging arm by side for long periods)

Please contact your therapist if you have any queries or concerns.

Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (07) 3646 7100