

# Controlling swelling in your hand

## Therapy Services

### Patient Information Leaflet

#### Introduction

Swelling is a normal reaction of the body after an injury. Much of this is due to a build-up of fluid between the tissues which is called oedema.

#### Why is it good to control the swelling?

Controlling it helps to reduce pain and joint stiffness.

#### How do I control it?

##### Elevation

Elevation is an important way to reduce oedema, especially when combined with exercises or movement. It means raising your hand up above the level of your heart.

Doing this whenever possible can help to reduce oedema by allowing excess fluid to drain away.

##### Ways to elevate your hand:

Whenever you sit or lie down, rest your hand and forearm on a stack of pillows:

- Keep your hand above the level of your heart
- Elevate your hand without bending your elbow tightly
- Do not let your hand drop over the edge of the pillows

If you have been given a sling, use it to elevate your hand when you are walking around.

##### Exercises

Whenever you stand for long periods of time, raise your hand above your head and do the exercise below, 10 times every 15 minutes.

- Close your fingers into a tight fist and then straighten them

This tightening then relaxation of the muscles in your hand acts as a pump to help push the fluid out of the hand and up your arm.

Do any other exercises as directed by your occupational therapist and use your hand throughout the day as normally as possible.

## Massage

A form of massage called retrograde massage can be used to reduce swelling that has collected in your hand as a result of injury. To do this:

- Put your hand on pillows or hold your hand in the air with your elbow resting on a table
- Apply lotion to your hand
- Start the massage by beginning at your fingertips and use firm pressure with long, smooth strokes to rub down your fingers towards the hand and wrist

## Other advice

Avoid wearing jewellery and tight clothing around the arm as this may make the problem worse.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Occupational therapist, Hand Therapy Team on 01384 456111 ext. 2430 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/occupational-therapy/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

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Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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