

LYMPH DRAINAGE TECHNIQUESA Radical Self Help Programme© F.J. Fox B.A. 9 Dec 1988
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Lymph is the colourless tissue fluid that overflows from tissues and organs throughout the body into myriads of tiny capillaries and ducts and then slowly makes its way to the bloodstream via a complicated system of ducts and nodes all ending in two drainage points located each side of the vase of the neck on the subclavian veins.

The role of the lymph system is manifold:

- 1) To maintain tissue fluid and protein balance throughout the body by removing and re-circulating excessive amounts from any part of the body.
- 2) To produce and circulate lymphocytes throughout the body in order to protect it from infection and allergy thus providing immunity.
- 3) To assist with the circulation of nutrients (proteins, fats, sugar), vitamins, minerals, and hormones to all cells of the body.
- 4) To remove waste products and other toxic matter from body tissues thus maintaining its inner environment.

Lymphocytes originate mainly in bone marrow and then develop in lymphoid tissue located in lymph nodes, the thymus (responsible for T cells), the spleen, liver, tonsils, appendix, Peyer's Patches and Papillae Vateri (all of which produce B cells, the lymphocytes which make antibodies).

Lymph nodes filter lymph enroute to the bloodstream, breaking down tissue waste, destroying foreign matter (bacteria and cancerous cells) and neutralising or containing toxic matter (e.g., free radicals such as metals) as far as possible. Lymph passes through superficial nodes located usually in the periphery of organs, and through deep nodes located strategically along trunk routes through the body (the neck, armpits, anterior and posterior intercostal areas, the mesenterium of the small intestine and colon, the vicinity of the rectum and in the inguinal areas of the legs).

If the lymphatics of any organ become overloaded, that organ is bound to suffer from lack of nutrients, waste removal and protection against invasion by toxic matter and microbes. Oedema may follow. For example, much heart disease may be caused by chronic lymphostasis (blocked or congested lymph drainage). Angina may be caused by pressure on the coronary arteries from congested lymph ducts running alongside them.

The purpose of the lymph drainage techniques described below is to assist the deep lymphatics to clear, so that the superficial ones can then drain spontaneously and cope better with their protective work. It may often be necessary to assist the superficial nodes, too, especially if they, as well as the deep nodes, are overloaded with metal ions. Metals from dental materials, ornaments, cosmetics, petrol and gas fumes, medicines and food are, in my experience, the most common cause of lymph drainage problems. Fortunately, their clearance from lymph nodes has proved so far (5 years of experience) to be safe, as few of them are carcinogenic.

Forced lymph drainage, even of the deep lymphatics, is contra indicated in the following cases: all malignant disease, all acute infections, and inflammations and when the kidneys, liver, spleen, or lungs are already overloaded with toxic matter. Superficial lymph drainage massage is also contra indicated if the deep lymphatics are blocked, where there are varicose veins, acute inflammation, open rash, or danger from recent thrombosis. Lymph drainage should not be attempted during an asthmatic attack or in cases of cardiac oedema (dysfunction of the right side of the heart).

If possible, lymph drainage exercises should be preceded and guided by expert testing of the main physiological functions of the body. Unfortunately, such testing, using acupuncture points related to the lymph drainage, is rarely available. Lymph drainage remains a much neglected physiological function of the body both in conventional and other therapies.

Before lymph drainage exercises, one should make sure, as far as possible, that the blood filters – especially the kidneys, spleen, liver, and bile systems are functioning well. Headaches usually entail filter problems.

Organ areas can also be palpated for signs of pain or inflammation. As a precaution, one can tap the rib cage with one's fist over the spleen, liver, and kidney areas to stimulate the organs and help them deal with any overloading, both before and after lymph draining exercise. It may also be wise to drink extra water to help flush out toxic matter.

1. To clear deep lymphatics in the neck: Use the right hand to massage the left side of the neck along the sternomastoid muscle down from the back of the jaw to the hollow behind the collar bone where the lymph drains into the subclavian vein. Keep the thumb on the right side of the neck to act as a guide. Massage downwards slowly and ever more deeply, at least ten times. Then massage the right side of the neck similarly with the left hand.
2. To clear the head: Use the right hand as before to massage under the left side of the jaw, down towards the side of the neck to clear the lymph nodes under the jaw, which drain the jaw and the mouth. Then reverse the hands as before. Next, use the tips of the fingers of both hands to massage and drain the lymph nodes of the sinuses and the cheeks, the eyes, and the ears. Then massage under the jaws again. finally, down each side of the neck.
3. To clear the axillary nodes (armpits)*: With the right-hand massage from the left armpit up to and along the collar bone (clavicle) to the lymph drainage point. Repeat about ten times. Then with the left-hand massage from the right armpit to the lymph draining point behind the right clavicle. *Alternatively: roll up hand towel, position it firmly under the armpit; then press and hold elbow firmly against the ribcage.
4. To clear the lymph cistern: place the palm of the left hand just to the left of the centre of the abdomen and without breathing in, bulge out the abdomen with some force against the hand, and then while maintaining the pressure in the abdomen, breath in slowly and deeply. Then relax and breathe out. Repeat at least three times.
5. To clear the deep lymph trunks and nodes that drain the small intestine and colon as well as the areas around the rectum: Roll up a medium sized hand towel, place it in the right groin and then (either sitting or lying) bend the right leg by the knee and pull it up with both hands towards the chest. Hold it there for about 10 seconds to allow lymph to drain under pressure up into the lymph cistern. Then do the same with the left leg. Repeat the procedure with each leg twice more. Conclude by draining the lymph cistern again.
6. To clear the deep inguinal nodes: Press the thenar of the right thumb down into the hollow at the top of the right leg near the pubic bone and at the same time draw in the lower abdomen as if to suck up the lymph from that area. Repeat several times. Then do the same with the left thumb on the left upper leg. Next massage down along each groin and up along the inner edge of each thigh to drain the superficial nodes into the deep nodes. Then repeat the deep inguinal nodes drainage, the abdominal drainage (5.?) and finally the lymph cistern drainage exercises.
7. To clear the superior mesenteric lymph nodes in the epigastrium: with the tip of the right thumb at the base of the sternum, press the thenar of the thumb down deep along the right edge of the rib cage. Then exert abdominal pressure against the thumb and thenar several times for about five seconds, to force lymph into the lymph cistern. Clear the lymph cistern, and then repeat the exercise on the left edge of the rib cage. Finally, clear the lymph cistern. These exercises are most important in cases of faulty fat metabolism (M.S., etc) and faulty uric acid metabolism (rheumatoid arthritis). An alternative: Have someone hold his or her hands over the lower, flexible ribs each side as you breathe slowly in and out several times. As you breathe out, have your friends take up the slack by maintaining the pressure. As you breathe in about the third time, your friend should release the pressure suddenly so that you gasp in with some force. Repeat once or twice. Caution: avoid this alternative when bones are brittle due to osteoporosis.
8. To clear the intercostal nodes for the lungs: With a thumb or forefinger massage along the two intercostal spaces just above the edge of the rib cage each side. These nodes drain into the superior mesenteric nodes which must then be cleared again as described above. This latter exercise is the most important.
9. To clear the parasternal nodes (intercostal spaces both sides of the sternum): With the two or three fingers massage each space up to two inches each side of the sternum. Begin just under the collar bone and work down to the edge of the rib cage. Then work upwards several times, gradually deepening the action.
10. To clear the paravertebral nodes in the back of the chest: use the clenched fist and tap down along each side of the spine (Chinese 'DO-IN') about 5 times. Alternatively massage the intercostal space. Then empty the lymph cistern (4.).

11. To clear the deep lymphatics of the heart and pericardium: Massage with the thumbs or fingertips along the third intercostal space above the edge of the rib cage each side. The spaces lie at the roots of the breasts. Begin just under each breast and follow the curvature of the space (and breast) to the very edge of the sternum. Repeat about five times, gradually deepening the pressure without causing pain. Work out the areas next to the sternum very carefully, especially on the left side. Then massage across the sternum from left to right with considerable pressure along the slight depression that joins the left and right intercostal spaces. It is necessary to drain the lymph from the heart through this area to the right side of the sternum where it drains into the same intercostal nodes (already cleared in exercise 9) as the lymph from the pericardium. Then repeat exercise 9.

N.B Congested lymph nodes under the sternum can affect the cardiac ganglia and cause palpitations. Also congested, parasternal nodes, as one lies sideways.

12. To clear the thymus: massage deeply behind the notch at the top of the sternum and then across the first and second depressions that cross the sternum. The lymph drains into the nodes each side of the sternum and these should then be drained up into the drainage points as in exercise 9.

N.B. Lymph drainage of the thymus is most important to maintain the immune system. Lymphocytes must circulate through the thymus in order to be changed into phagocytes, the body's scavengers.

13. To clear the deep bronchial lymphatics: Massage deeply and firmly with the fingertips along the third depression of the sternum (just below the previous two and just above the one cleared in the heart drainage exercise). Repeat several times. Then also massage the fourth depression to make sure the clearance of the bronchial nodes is complete. Finally, massage up along each side of the sternum to keep these nodes clear as well.

14. To clear the lymphatics of the mammary glands: * Massage may be done by using a rolled-up hand towel to roll along the direction of drainage. This can be done over the clothing. First, determine the directions of flow by imagining the face of a clock directly over each breast. First, the right breast: the section 11:00 to 1:00 drains directly upwards through nodes into the lymph drainage points. The section 1:00 to 5:00 drains into the nodes behind the intercostal spaces next to the sternum. The section 5:00 to 7:00 drains down into the nodes behind the first and second intercostal spaces above the edge of the rib cage (the nodes which also drain the lung cf. exercise 8). The section 7:00 to 11:00 drains outwards and upwards into the axillary nodes of the armpit.

Next the left breast: the section 11:00 to 1:00 drains directly upwards through nodes into the lymph drainage point. The section 1:00 to 5:00 drains outwards and then upwards into the axillary nodes. The section 5:00 to 7:00 drains down into the nodes behind the first and second intercostal spaces above the edge of the rib cage (the nodes which also drain the lung, cf. exercise 8). The section 7:00 to 11:00 drains inwards to the nodes behind the intercostal spaces next to the sternum.

After clearing the lymphatics of the breasts, one should normally then also massage the axillary nodes (exercise 3), the parasternal nodes (exercise 9) and the lung nodes (exercise 8 and 7) to prevent further congestion. Congestion down the line will only cause congestion again further up the line.

Some very important footnotes:

1. These lymph drainage exercises should never be done all at once, especially in the beginning. Rather they should be well staggered, so that not too much toxic matter is drained into the bloodstream at one time, overloading the filters. Otherwise, reactions such as headaches, exhaustion and other reactions may follow. (Read: A Special Precaution overleaf).
2. Begin with the most urgent exercises: No 1 to clear the neck nodes in case of faulty calcium metabolism (osteo-arthritis) and thyroid problems. No 9 to clear the heart lymphatics or No 11 to clean the bronchial nodes in case of heart and breathing problems. No 4 to clear the lymph cistern in case of congestion in the abdominal nodes. No 5 in case of lower back pain and sciatica or problems with organs in the pelvis.
3. Wait a day or so after clearing sever problem areas in order to give the filters a chance to clear before proceeding to clear other problem areas.

Other Observations:

1. Clearance of the lymphatics in the neck, the mid and lower sternum, the lymph cistern, the superior mesenteric area, the deep abdominal and pelvic areas, and the paravertebral areas is especially important. If toxic amounts of any substance whose molecular magnetic oscillations are out of harmony with the magnetic oscillations of nerve ganglia and plexus build up in lymphatics (nodes, ducts, the cistern) near to the ganglia or plexus, they usually dampen (sedate) or less frequently stimulate the nerve signals. Such interference is similar to crackling on a telephone line: it distorts the signals. This has an adverse effect on organs whose activity is controlled by autonomic nerve signals from the ganglia and plexuses. The organs are finely tuned by the delicate balance between the sympathetic and the parasympathetic signals which control them. That balance can be destroyed by molecular oscillations from toxic matter. Then the organs go out of tune and malfunction. Various health problems may follow:
 - 1) Osteo-arthritis, osteoporosis, hypo or hyperthyroidism: lymphatics in neck near the cervical ganglia
 - 2) Rheumatoid arthritis: lymph nodes near thoracic aortic plexus, left side of epigastrium. Due to faulty uric acid metabolism.
 - 3) Multiple sclerosis and other forms of degeneration of the central nervous system: due to faulty fat metabolism. Lymph nodes near the superior mesenteric plexus, in the right side of the epigastrium.
 - 4) Protein allergies: due to faulty protein metabolism. Lymphatics near the coeliac plexus and ganglia.
 - 5) Hypo-insulinism (diabetes mellitus): due to faulty carbohydrate metabolism and innervation of the Islets of Langerhans. Lymphatics near the abdominal aortic plexus in mid-abdomen.
 - 6) Sciatic: weakness in pelvis due to faulty innervation from the lower hypogastric plexus. Lymphatics in mid pelvis near upper rectum.
 - 7) Asthma: faulty innervation of the bronchi and bronchiole by the bronchial plexus. Lymphatics behind the mid sternum.
 - 8) Palpitations and arrhythmia: faulty innervation of the heart by the cardiac ganglia and /or 5th thoracic ganglia. Lymphatics behind lower sternum and paravertebral area. Pressure on the 5th thoracic nerve due to calcium deposits on vertebra may also be a factor. Check calcium metabolism.

A Special precaution:

One must always consider what happens to toxic matter after it pours into the blood stream with lymph. Since it enters the subclavian veins, it must go directly to the right side of the heart, then through the capillary beds of the lungs, back to the heart, left side, and then into general circulation. About 20% of the blood goes up into the head, the remainder into the body. Eventually, toxic matter must be filtered out of the blood by the kidneys, spleen, and liver.

The kidneys will filter out toxic amounts of inorganic salts such as sodium chloride, waste products such as uric acid, urea, creatinine (muscle waste) and other metabolic products. Also, remains of vitamins, (e.g., Vitamin C) hormones, drugs, and various chemicals from foods.

The spleen and liver must filter out excessive fats and proteins as well as fat soluble and protein chelated elements and minerals, including metals and minerals. Since the only blood outlet from the spleen is to the liver via the portal vein, all these wastes must eventually be processed and eliminated by the liver. Water soluble products return to the bloodstream for elimination by the kidneys; fat solubles enter the bile ductules with bile itself and then pass out of the body via the intestines.

However, toxic matter can get trapped in the capillary beds of various organs before it enters the kidneys, spleen, and liver. Often this is due to agglutination with blood cells which then cannot pass freely through the minute capillaries. Such blockages occur quite frequently with normal lymph drainage. But it is much more likely to happen with forced lymph drainage, whether from strenuous work / exercise in general or from lymph drainage exercises in particular. It is less likely to occur when the heart is beating rapidly due to extra pressure on the capillaries. But this is not normally the case during therapy. Compensation can be made by simply placing one's hands over the abdomen, holding the breath, and then pushing the blood up into the brain and through the body by pressing hard against the abdomen. Repeat several times. Then tap the rib cage over the heart, lungs, spleen, and liver area.