

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

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# Hand Therapy: Swelling management

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## What is swelling?

Swelling occurs as part of your body's natural response to an injury or surgery. It acts as a cushion to the damaged area.

Swelling helps to keep the injured part still whilst healing begins, and contains substances which will help repair the damaged area.

## Why can swelling be a problem?

If swelling continues in your hand it can lead to joints becoming stiff and painful.

Swelling fluid is thicker than your normal body fluid, and becomes even thicker if it becomes trapped in one place. This means your tendons (guiders) will not move and glide as they should.

If you have any questions or concerns about your exercises or your condition please contact your occupational therapist

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on (01623) 622515, extension 4271.

**For appointment queries please contact Therapy Services reception at King's Mill Hospital on (01623) 622515, extension 3221, or Newark Hospital on 01636 685885.**

## Treatments

All treatments should be used under the direction of a therapist. Any sudden increase in swelling, pins and needles, numbness or pain should be reported immediately to your therapist.

## Elevation

Allows swelling to drain away.

For elevation to work effectively you must lift the swollen area above your heart.

Elevate as much as you can, for example, when watching TV or during a break at work.

Use cushions for support and comfort.

## Active movement

Movement can help 'push' swelling away.

Elevate the affected area (as described previously, above your heart).

Squeeze and release so that you make a fist then let go.

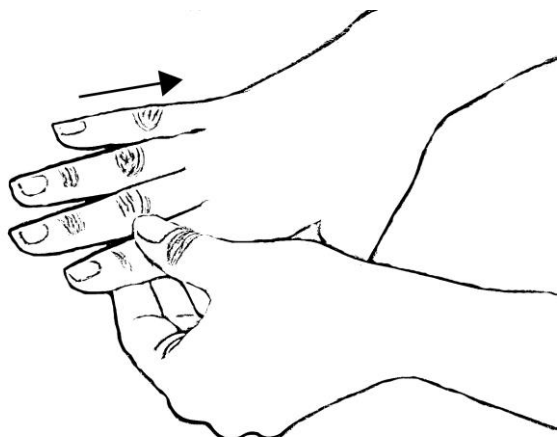
Repeat this at least 25 times, with some speed.

## Retrograde massage

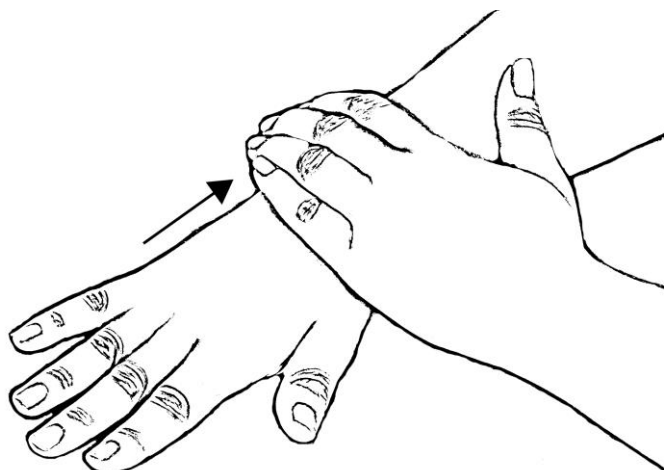
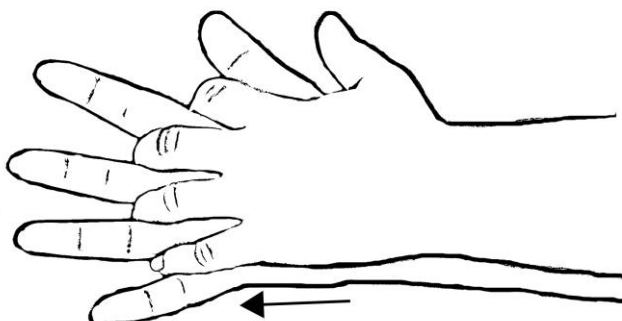
Massage can help your body to remove swelling fluid. Massage gently using a water-based moisturising cream.

### Retrograde massage (continued)

1) Massage down all your fingers, just in one direction, starting at your finger tips.



2) Next massage up your palm, through your finger spaces and down the back of your hand and forearm, finishing at your elbow.



### Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

### Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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