The aim of your massage

The aim of massage is to move fluid from swollen areas of the body to areas where it can drain away normally. This means that the direction of massage is towards your normal armpit, on the opposite side of your body to your swollen arm. From here fluid can drain back into your bloodstream.

The technique described here uses massage to the chest rather than the swollen arm itself. By removing the fluid from the part of the body next to the swollen arm and so clearing the way ahead, the fluid in the arm has a better chance of draining away.

This type of massage is very slow and gentle, using just enough pressure to cause the skin under your hand to move slightly. If your hand glides over the skin you are not pressing firmly enough and if your skin becomes red you are pressing too hard.

You need to perform the massage sequence once a day.

It will take about twenty minutes and should be performed on bare skin.

Do not use any creams, oils or talc.

Do not attempt to do this massage until you have received full instructions from your therapist.
First of all, settle yourself into a comfortable position, sitting upright in a chair or lying down. It is very important that you follow the sequence exactly as described. Do not skip any of the steps or change the order of the movements. Take four deep breaths before you begin.

**Step 1**
Place your hands either side of your neck just below your ears. Make a slow semi-circular movement using the flat part of your fingers. Keep your fingers in contact with the skin as you move the skin backwards then downwards with pressure. Release the pressure as you come back up to your original position. Your elbows should be up and together if possible. Repeat this five times.

**Step 2**
Move your hands a little lower down your neck. Repeat the semi-circular movement exactly as described in Step 1. Do this five times.

**Step 3**
Place your finger tips in the hollows above your collar bones. Repeat the circular movement in towards your neck then down towards the body with pressure. Then release the pressure as you return to your original position. Repeat five times. Repeat steps 1, 2 and 3 twice more.
This will make a total of 15 movements/times on each spot. Steps 4, 5 and 6 are best done when you are lying down, or reclining in a comfortable chair.

**Step 4**

Place the hand of your unaffected arm out to your side. Use the flat part of the other hand to massage the lymph glands under your armpit with a semi-circular movement. Pull the skin towards the front of your body and then upwards with pressure. Release the pressure as you return to your original position. Repeat this twenty times and then lower your arm. This should take about one minute.

**Step 5**

Place the flat of your hand on the skin next to the top of your unaffected arm. Grip the skin, stretching it as far as it will stretch towards your normal side, then release. Move your hand back a little closer towards your swollen side and repeat. Keep doing this until you have worked right across your chest and are right by the top of...

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...your swollen arm. You may change hands but remember which way the fluid is moving. Return to the unaffected side and start again, slightly lower down.
Repeat the whole procedure for another complete stripe across the chest. Keep repeating this working further and further down your chest until you reach your waistline. This should take 5–10 minutes.
If you get tired, rest a while then continue.

Step 6
When you have finished the massage, perform this breathing exercise which will improve the drainage of the deep lymphatic system:
Lay comfortably on your back.
Place your hands on your abdomen with your fingers overlapped. Breathe in slowly and deeply. You should feel your abdomen rise upwards as you breathe in. Hold your breath for a slow count of two, then breathe out slowly. At same time press your hands down firmly onto your abdomen. Hold your breath for a slow count of two and relax. Repeat this four times. Rest for a couple of minutes before getting up.

The information in this leaflet has been adapted from Massage Instructions produced by The Royal Marsden Hospital, London & Surrey.

If you require this information in an alternative format please call 01803 210844

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