Techniques to Reduce Swelling in the Hand or Arm

Preventing and/or treating swelling, also called edema are a key part in the rehabilitation of your hand and arm. These techniques can be used to decrease the swelling in your involved hand or arm.

Do only the techniques that are checked and explained to you by your therapist.

□ **Elevation:** Your hand needs to be above the level of your heart. Use pillows at night to prop up your arm and hand. During the day, keep your hand elevated as much as possible – not down swinging at your side.

- If you are able to, hold your arm straight up, overhead and gently wiggle your fingers for 1 minute. Do this every 1 to 2 hours when you are awake.

□ **Retrograde Massage:** Retrograde massage should be performed with the hand elevated. Encircle your fingers and stroke the fingers from the tip down through the hand and past the wrist. Follow the massage with active range of motion exercises as given to you by your therapist. Otherwise, make a fist then open as far as you can without pain 10 times. Do ______ times per day.

□ **Coban Wrapping:** Starting at the tip of your finger, wrap closely and firmly around the finger. Leave a small opening at the tip so you can check to color of your finger. Wrapping should progress from the tip down until all of the involved fingers are wrapped. Complete as instructed by your therapist.

Talk with your therapist about any questions or concerns.

□ **Use of an Edema Glove:** The glove compresses the hand to keep the swelling down. Wear the glove:

- At night.
- During the day.
- 24 hours per day except for washing and bathing.

□ **Contrast Baths:** Put hot (100-105 degrees) water in a container large enough to fit your hand or a sink. Fill a second container with cold (55-65 degrees) water.

- Place your hand in the hot water for four minutes, then cold water for one minute.

- Do this for four cycles ending with cold water.

- Then dry your hand and use a small amount of hand lotion on your hand to perform retrograde massage.

- Do ______ times per day.

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