

# Lymphatic Drainage

**A Critical Secret to Relieving Pain, Healing Old Injuries, Reversing Chronic Disease and Keeping Your Immune System Strong**

Modern plumbing was one of the greatest innovations mankind has made in reducing the instance of infectious diseases. Contaminated water and the lack of effective sewage systems made infections the leading cause of death for hundreds of years. Many researchers believe that the creation of safe water and sewage systems had more to do with conquering infectious diseases than antibiotics or vaccines.

Today, just about everyone in Western society can turn on the tap and enjoy clean, hot and cold running water for drinking, washing and bathing. They also have a sewage system that drains away waste water and sends it through treatment plants before returning the water to nature.

## The Plumbing System of the Body

In order to be healthy, cells need a constant supply of fresh fluid, laden with the oxygen and nutrients they need to survive. It is the job of the cardiovascular system to supply this. The arteries deliver oxygenated blood and nutrients to the tissues and the veins carry the carbon dioxide back to the heart and lungs to be eliminated.

Very few people are aware of the other major branch of their body's plumbing system—the lymphatic system. Lymph is the fluid that leaves the blood stream to bring water, oxygen and nutrients to cells. In fact, this colorless fluid bathes every cell in the body.

Once lymph enters the tissues, it does not move back into the blood stream, which is why veins aren't the body's sewage system. Lymph must be drained away by the lymphatic system, another branch of circulation that drains the lymph from the tissues, removing toxins, cellular debris and infectious organisms at the same time.

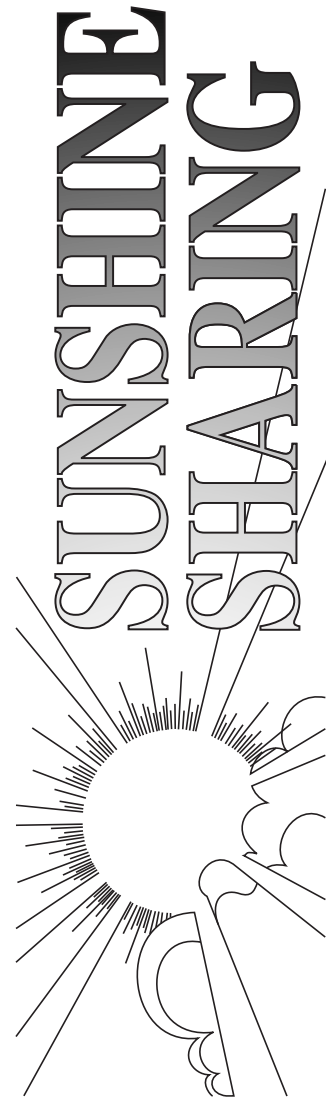
## Lymphatic Stagnation and Disease

Most health enthusiasts know a lot about the cardiovascular portion of the body's circulation, but few know much about the lymphatic system. This is unfortunate, because maintaining proper lymphatic drainage is a critical key to overall health.

For starters, the lymphatic system is a critical part of the immune system and responsible for cellular detoxification. The major eliminative organs like the colon and kidneys remove waste from the body, but it is primarily the lymphatic system that removes waste from the tissues. It is also the primary home for the adaptive immune system, the part of the immune system that gives you permanent immunity to certain infections. So, healthy lymphatic drainage is critical to your body's ability to resist both toxins and infection.

Lymphatic congestion is at the base of many common health problems including tonsillitis, earaches and ear infections, breast swelling and tenderness, some cases of prostate swelling, and chronic sinus problems. There is a much greater tendency to cysts, tumors,

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

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## Lymphatic Drainage

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allergies, sore throats, spleen problems, and skin problems like eczema with lymphatic stagnation. Recent research shows that lymphatic flow is also critical to hormone distribution and balance.

Keeping lymph moving is key to healing injuries and relieving pain, both acute and chronic. When tissues are injured, they become inflamed. In the inflammatory process lymph in the injured area becomes congested and this fluid must be drained away via the lymphatic system in order for the tissues to heal. If this does not happen the tissues at the site of injury become chronically congested and inflamed.



Chronic inflammation is now recognized as the beginning state of just about all chronic and degenerative diseases. So, knowing how to improve lymphatic drainage is key to both preventing chronic disease as well as recovering from chronic disease and injury.

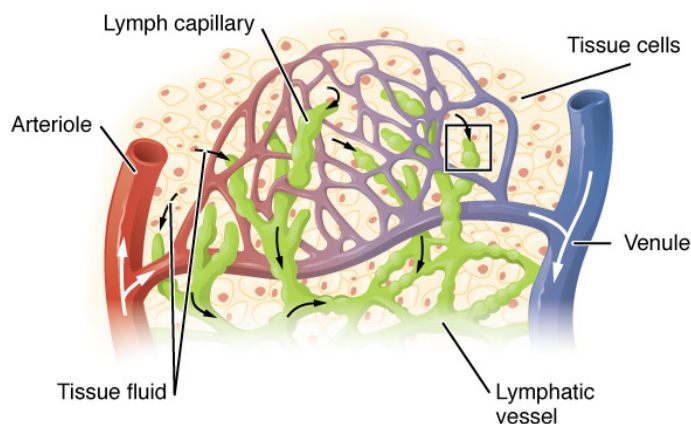
To state it simply, when your lymphatic system isn't working properly, it's like having a clogged drain. There is a back up of lymphatic fluid in the tissues causing swelling and water retention. Waste materials and infectious organisms are not removed and the supply of fresh lymph from the blood stream is also diminished. Cells start to starve for oxygen and nutrients as they suffocate in their own waste materials. Thus, ensuring good lymphatic drainage is essential to helping all cells stay healthy and to aid the healing process after they have been damaged.

## Understanding Your Lymphatic System

To maintain a healthy lymphatic system it's useful to understand how it works. Starting from the circulatory system, arteries carry blood away from the heart into a network of tiny capillaries that deliver the blood to the tissues. The veins collect blood from the capillaries and take it back to the heart. As shown in the illustration to the right, tissues also have a network of lymphatic capillaries and ducts that drain fluid from the tissues into lymph nodes.

## Lymphatic Movement

Unlike the cardiovascular system, the lymphatic system has no pump to move the lymph. Instead muscle movement, including the movement of breathing, compresses



lymph ducts moving the lymph fluid through a series of one-way valves. These valves force the lymph fluid to move forward and not backward.

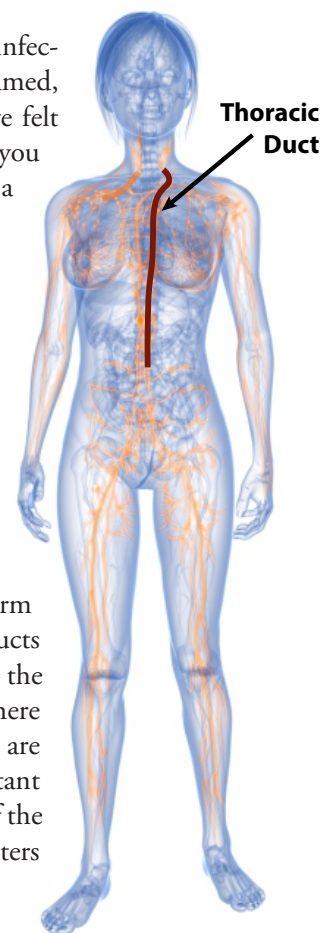
## Lymph Nodes

The lymph nodes are an important part of the immune system. They can be thought of as the body's sewage treatment system. Lymph nodes are filled with white blood cells called lymphocytes, primarily B-cells and T-cells. B-cells are part of the adaptive immune system because they recognize specific invaders and produce antibodies to tag those invaders so that T-cells can destroy them.

When dealing with toxins and infection, lymph nodes may become inflamed, causing them to swell. You may have felt these swollen lymph nodes when you had an infection like the mumps or a sore throat.

## The Thoracic Duct

After undergoing this inspection for toxins and pathogens, the lymph from the lower extremities, abdomen, left arm and the left side of the head is transported into a major lymphatic duct known as the thoracic duct, as shown in the illustration. A smaller duct, known as the right lymphatic duct drains lymph from the right arm and right side of the head. Both ducts empty into the subclavian veins at the base of the neck, near the thyroid, where the iodine based thyroid hormones are secreted. Iodine is a natural disinfectant and thyroid hormones may be part of the final purification of this fluid as it re-enters the cardiovascular system.



## Other Lymphatic Tissue

Other tissues that are heavily involved in the lymphatic system include the tonsils, appendix, spleen, thymus gland and breasts. The tonsils and appendix, which used to be considered unnecessary organs, have been discovered to be critical parts of the lymphatic-immune system. They become swollen and inflamed when they are fighting infections in the head (tonsillitis) or gut (appendicitis).

There are also large collections of lymph nodes in the groin and armpits and the sweat glands in these areas appear to help with lymphatic detoxification as well.

## Keeping Your Lymph Moving

When you are sitting still, lymphatic flow diminishes. This causes fluid to start building up the tissues. It's why you start to feel uncomfortable when sitting at a desk or classroom for long periods of time. As soon as you get up and start moving around, lymph flow increases and you feel better.

It also helps us understand why infants will cry when left lying down for long periods of time. Parents instinctively pick the baby up and rock them up and down to help them feel better. This pumps the babies lymphatic system.

This also explains why inflammatory conditions like arthritis (inflammation of the joints) usually feel worse in the morning after being relatively sedentary all night and start to feel better as you begin moving around.

### Lymphasizing

This brings us to the first rule for maintaining a healthy lymph system—get moving. This does not have to be strenuous exercise. Walking, stretching, swimming or any other activity that gets your body moving will dramatically increase lymph flow, helping your tissues detoxify and get more oxygen and nutrients. It even helps reduce chronic inflammation.



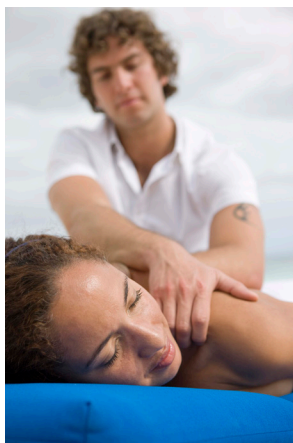
A particularly effective way to move lymph is to bounce up and down gently on a mini trampoline. Your feet don't need to leave the mat, making this a very low impact way to get your lymphatic system moving. The late Dr. C. Samuel West of the International Academy of Lymphology called this exercise lymphasizing. It's also known as rebounding.

### Deep Breathing

When you take a deep breath, the movement of the chest compresses the major lymphatic ducts in the chest causing a dramatic increase in lymph movement throughout the entire body. This helps to explain why people often yawn or sigh when getting up to stretch after a period of inactivity. Most people are shallow breathers and practicing deep breathing exercises, especially when you are unable to be physically active is a great way to improve lymphatic flow and bring more oxygen to your tissues.

### Pressure, Massage and Rubbing

It's instinctive to apply pressure, massage or rub areas of your body that hurt. Since compressing tissues in any way results in increased lymph flow in that area, these actions help to ease lymphatic



stagnation, resulting in a reduction of pain and an improvement of tissue health.

These actions work even better when one applies herbs or essential oils to the area to help move lymph and increase circulation. For instance, applying **lobelia** and **capsicum** tinctures, mixed together in equal parts, relaxes muscles, improves lymph flow and increases circulation, which reduces inflammation and pain much faster than massage alone.

A **Topical Analgesic Blend** containing essential oils like wintergreen, camphor, menthol, lavender and clove is also very helpful, especially for muscle and joint pain. Diluting any of these single oils into a massage oil or lotion will also work to ease muscle and joint pain. These oils can also be massaged into areas where the lymph nodes are swollen or tender.

## Hydration and Lymph Flow

Both blood and lymph are primarily composed of water, and dehydration will thicken both blood and lymph, reducing their flow. Thirst is regulated by the water level in the blood, but when you're low on fluids, only 8% of the water loss is from the blood. Another 26% is from extracellular fluids or lymph and the rest is from inside of your cells.



Thus, moderate dehydration can cause lymphatic stagnation, which increases pain and irritation to all tissues. If your lymph is congested you need to drink plenty of water to help your lymph drain properly.

Mineral electrolytes like sodium, potassium and magnesium are also needed for lymph flow. In traditional Chinese medicine, salty herbs like seaweeds were used to help lymphatic swelling so it makes sense to use a little bit of a natural salt or some seaweed like kelp or dulse along with the water.

## Lymph Moving Herbs

There are many herbs that can be helpful for clearing lymphatic congestion and stagnation. Here are a few, but remember that all of them work best when taken with plenty of water.

Some gentle lymph moving herbs include mullein, red clover, cleavers and plantain. All of these herbs are mild and well tolerated even by young children and seniors.

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### Additional Help and Information

For more information about lymphatic drainage contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

*The Golden Seven Plus One* by Dr. C. Samuel West

Lymphatic System picture on page two is from Wikimedia Commons

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**Mullein** is very helpful for clearing lymphatic congestion and mucus congestion in the lung area. **Red clover** and cleavers are great herbs for general lymphatic stagnation and swollen lymph nodes. Plantain is also helpful for congested lymph, especially when it is due to injuries.

Stronger lymph moving herbs include **echinacea**, red root, **yarrow** and **lobelia**. Echinacea is excellent for any kind of lymphatic congestion where there is a bacterial or viral infection at work. It boosts the immune responses, inhibits the spread of infection and aids lymph flow.

Red root is particularly helpful for swollen lymph nodes and/or an enlarged spleen. Yarrow and lobelia also improve lymphatic drainage.

You can use a **Lymph-Moving Formula** that contains any of the above herbs as key ingredients to help decongest the lymphatics and promote better drainage. A particularly good program is to add 1/2-1 teaspoon of a liquid Lymph-Moving Formula containing red clover, cleavers, stillingia and prickly ash and 1/2-1 teaspoon of a liquid **Kidney Stimulating Formula** containing asparagus, plantain, juniper berries and goldenrod to a quart of water. Sip this throughout the day, so you're both hydrating and moving your lymph.

## Therapeutic Uses of Lymph-Moving Herbs

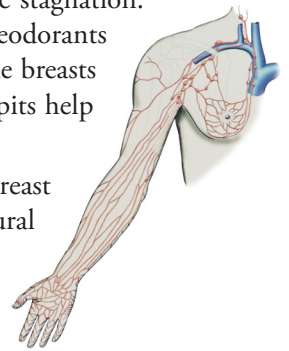
Lymph-moving herbs can be very beneficial in health conditions where there is lymphatic stagnation such as edema (water retention), swollen lymph nodes and respiratory congestion. **Lymph-Moving Formulas** containing echinacea and yarrow can also be helpful for infections, sore throats, earaches and tonsillitis.

## Lymphatic Congestion and Breast Health

Keeping the lymph moving is important for breast health. The breasts have a great deal of lymphatic tissue and breast lumps

and cysts are often due to lymphatic stagnation. The use of antiperspirant underarm deodorants increases lymphatic congestion in the breasts because the sweat glands in the armpits help to detoxify the lymphatic system.

Many women have found that breast health is improved by using a natural **Enzyme Spray** as an underarm deodorant. It works even better if you add some of your favorite essential oils. It can also be helpful to spray it on the breasts while using a **Lymph-Moving Formula** internally.



## Cancer and Autoimmune Conditions

Cancer cells develop in a low oxygen environment, which means they are more likely to form where there is chronic lymphatic stagnation. So, keeping the lymphatics moving is important to reducing your cancer risk.

When a person has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatments, cancer cells are dying and the debris from these cells is entering the lymphatic system. This often results in further lymphatic congestion and swollen lymph nodes. Using lymph-moving herbs or formulas, particularly formulas with red root and echinacea can help the lymph system handle this overload of cellular debris.

The gentler lymph-moving herbs like red clover and cleavers, and formulas containing them, may also be helpful as part of a comprehensive program for autoimmune disorders. Helping to clear up lymphatic congestion can calm down the hyper immune reactions associated with autoimmune conditions.

It's important to remember that good lymphatic drainage helps every cell of your body. So, any health issue you experience can probably benefit from making sure your body's sewage system, the lymphatics, is draining properly.