

6-Step Lymphatic Balancing

By Kerry D'Ambrogio, DOM, AP, PT, DO-MTP

1. Perform a total body evaluation.

Always start the session with a total body evaluation to determine if there are lines of tension in the body that are creating restrictive barriers to lymphatic flow.

If lines of tension are found, then treat with a total body balancing technique. Such a technique helps release lines of tension in the upper and lower extremities, cranium, spine, thorax, abdomen and pelvis that could be compromising the drainage pathway of the primary area of complaint.

2. Balance the four transverse diaphragms.

The transverse diaphragms (pelvic floor, respiratory diaphragm, thoracic inlet and tentorium cerebella) are all oriented horizontally and, when restricted, can impede lymph flow, as well as other vital structures that impact blood (artery or vein), nerve and energy flow. To ensure unimpeded fluid flow, it is imperative to make sure these diaphragms are functioning correctly.

3. Balance the autonomic nervous system.

The autonomic nervous system comprises the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Both systems involuntary regulate internal body functions, but have opposite effects on the functions regulated.

With fluid flow, the autonomic nervous system controls microcirculation through vasoconstriction and vasodilatation of the lymph and blood vessels. Since most people tend to be on sympathetic overload, it is important to balance the autonomic nervous system prior to treatment.

4. Balance local restrictions.

Evaluate and treat any local restrictions in the primary area of complaint that may be interfering with the flow of lymph before performing Lymphatic Balancing techniques. Local muscle, joint or fascia restrictions can create barriers to the local flow of lymph and blood, and need to be removed.

5. Promote lymphatic flow.

Perform the appropriate Lymphatic Balancing techniques to promote lymphatic flow in the area. When performing Lymphatic Balancing, treatment sequence is important. Fluid moves from high to low pressure, therefore, treatment must start and end with creating a space for the fluid to flow.

Treatment begins by opening the proximal nodes. Once the nodes are open, treatment continues proximal to distal (to the site of swelling) by using effleurage and short-lever drainage and local pump techniques are used to bring the deeper swelling more superficial, aiding in its removal.

At this point in the sequence, focus shifts to moving the fluid distal to proximal by using short-lever pump techniques along the pathway toward the proximal nodes. Treatment then ends by opening the proximal nodes to further promote continued drainage.

6. Perform supportive techniques.

These techniques are used to enhance and lengthen the Lymphatic Balancing treatment effects. Active lymphatic pump exercises can be suggested as a home program to further address swelling and improve deep circulation. Additionally, basic lymphatic taping can be used to provide ongoing support and encourage continued drainage to the treatment area.