

# ACTIVATE YOUR LYMPHATIC SYSTEM FOR IMPROVED DRAINAGE AND DETOX

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## Article Summary:

- The lymphatic system, a vital part of the immune system, is comprised of lymph nodes, glands, and vessels, which gather waste and interstitial fluid. The lymphatic system also transports white blood cells into the bones and transports fatty acids.
- Your spleen is part of your lymphatic system, working to filter blood, and house white and red blood cells and platelets. Your tonsils, another part of the lymphatic system, contain B cells that fight infections, and your thymus gland helps T cells, a type of lymphocytes essential to the immune system, to mature.
- Those with chronic illness, sedentary lifestyle, or recent surgery can suffer from stagnant lymph. Some signs that lymphatic fluids might not be flowing well within your body include swelling, constipation, tender nodes, weight gain, frequent infections and viruses, and chronic congestion or sore throat.
- Your lymphatic system doesn't have a pump (like the heart) to move fluids throughout the body, so it relies on gravity and movement. One of the best things you can do for lymph movement is exercise: yoga, running, team sports, or whatever gets you off the couch and moving your feet. Any type of movement, even vigorous household cleaning, can be helpful.
- Self-drainage massages, myofascial releases, and professional lymphatic drainage massages also act as a pump to encourage lymph fluid from remaining stagnant. If you're doing one at home, make sure to use soft, gentle pressure.
- Rebounding is another excellent activity for lymphatic drainage. You can buy an inexpensive, personal-sized trampoline and bounce on it for just 5-10 minutes a day.

- Eating organic vegetables, fresh fruits, and homemade juices, along with staying hydrated, are additional ways to give your body an edge with lymphatic health.

## What Does Lymph Do in the Body?

The lymphatic system is an important part of the immune system, consisting of lymph nodes, but also the spleen, thymus gland, tonsils, bone marrow, and lymphatic vessel (which transports the lymph).

It runs parallel to the circulatory system, much of it flowing against gravity (in the direction from your feet to your chest). Because the lymphatic system doesn't have a pump like the circulatory system does with the heart, it relies on movement, muscles, and joints to keep it flowing.

Stagnant lymph is a huge problem, especially those who face chronic illnesses, like Lyme disease. When your lymphatic fluid is not moving through the body, toxins and waste will build up since the body is not properly draining, causing unpleasant symptoms. When your lymph is stagnant, it gets thick and heavy. Think about dumping thick bacon grease down your drain instead of just water—everything will start to slow down and back up. Here are some other functions of the lymphatic system:

- Aids in removing toxins and waste
- Removes fluid (lymphedema)
- Produces immune cells that fight infection and disease
- Absorbs fatty acid and transports fats

## How Do I Know if My Lymph Is Stagnant?

Because one of the primary jobs of the lymphatic system is waste removal, it can be compared to the garbage disposal in your kitchen sink. When everything is working properly, the disposal removes leftover foods, vegetable tops and peels, and unfinished drinks easily, with just the flip of a switch. The leftovers are then sent off to your septic system and water treatment plant for further processing and purification. When the lymphatic system is stuck, though, old foods and liquids (lymphatic fluid and waste), build up in your sink and cannot be processed correctly. And after just a day, your sink starts to

smell. Before, water flowed down the drain nicely, without effort. Now, food and liquid have combined to make a thick, sludgy soup that the disposal isn't able to get rid of. So you call a plumber to plunge it or use Drain-o, in the same way you physically manipulate your lymphatic system through massage or very clean eating and juicing, to get the whole system on track and working properly again.

Commonly, lymph nodes in the back of the neck or under the armpits are the ones that feel congested or tender when you're sick. But you have lymph nodes all over your body! In fact, only recently did researchers discover that the brain has its own lymphatic fluid, called "glymph." The "G" in glymph refers to glia, Greek for "glue." Glial cells help form myelin (a fatty compound that insulates nerve cells) and support neurons. The glymphatic system processes waste and toxins from the central nervous system through cerebrospinal fluid. This is why sleep is so vital to healing, because it's during sleep that the brain and nervous system can process all of this glymphatic fluid.<sup>1</sup> This neurotoxic waste removal is important for anyone, but especially those dealing with Lyme disease and co-infections, which have an affinity for the brain, causing neurological symptoms. Along with keeping the lymphatic fluid flowing, it's important that your glymph drains each night and does not get congested.

# HOW DO I KNOW IF MY LYMPH IS STAGNANT?

There are numerous warning signs and symptoms related to lymphatic congestion beyond just swollen and sore lymph nodes. Check in to see if you have more than just a few of the following chronic issues--your body may be trying to tell you something!



Constipation



Congestion



Clogged ears



Sore throat



Inflamed tonsils



Itchy or dry skin



Frequent viruses  
or infections



Fluid retention



Fatigue



Unexplained



Confusion or



Food or chemical

soreness	brain fog	sensitivities
 Weight gain	 Increased allergies	 Enlarged glands or painful lymph nodes

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Unless you have a very painful lymph node, you might not be aware of a lymph stagnancy problem in your body. There are countless clues your body provides that might alert you to the issue. Here are some of the common signs of stuck lymphatic fluids:

- Swollen, painful lymph nodes
- Enlarged glands
- Constipation
- Congestion
- Clogged ears
- Sore throat
- Inflamed tonsils
- Itchy or dry skin
- Frequent viruses or infections
- Retaining fluids
- Fatigue
- Unexplained soreness
- Confusion or brain fog
- Food or chemical sensitivities
- Weight gain
- Increased allergies

Activating your lymphatic system doesn't require a trip to the doctor or a prescription. Though it is possible to get a professional lymph drainage massage, there are plenty of ways to move lymphatic fluid right from the comfort of your home. The biggest focus for lymphatic health is movement—any type of exercise, yoga, or stretching can be beneficial to boost your body's natural drainage and detox capabilities. Other lifestyle choices, like eating a clean diet, dry brushing, and using essential oils, can help, too.

## Ways to Keep Lymph Flowing

**Rebounding:** Buy a small, personal-sized trampoline and bounce on it for 5-10 minutes a day. While burning a lot of calories and strengthening your skeletal system and muscles, this also works as a pump for your lymphatic fluid. It's also a great way for those with joint pain to get cardio and aerobic exercise, without pounding the pavement and going for a jog. Because of the changes in gravity while bounding, you'll experience increased oxygen to the cells and potential improved function of pulmonary circulation.<sup>2</sup>

**Castor Oil Packs:** Pour a few tablespoons of cold-pressed, organic, hexane-free castor oil onto unbleached flannel and place it over your liver, which is found on the bottom of your right ribcage. Then, cover it with an old towel and an infrared heating pad, or any other heat source available. Relax for 30-60 minutes. You may hear gurgling and growling noises, which is great! That means the liver and gallbladder are moving, and hopefully, toxins are leaving. You can use the packs anywhere on your body in the same way—on your abdomen, your neck, or other places. For best results, use castor oil packs immediately before bed (many report better sleep after packs) and for three or four nights in a row.

**Frankincense:** A few drops of Frankincense, with a carrier oil like jojoba or coconut oil, can be applied to lymph nodes to reduce swelling, encourage movement, and improve blood flow. [WO China Healing Oil](#) is another wonderful oil for the lymphatic system.

**Dry Skin Brushing:** Using a natural bristle brush, glide gently over your skin, always moving toward your heart. Focus especially on places where lymph can become stagnant, like your armpits, neck, chest, and groin. This stimulates lymph nodes and circulation. Dry brushing is best done immediately before a shower, because showering washes away all dead skin cells that get removed in the brushing process.

**Herbal teas:** Warm herbal teas, like ginger, astragalus, red root, or cleavers, can help stimulate lymphatic movement, as well as keeping you hydrated. Ginger tea is a universally helpful one for digestive issues and overall cleansing.<sup>3</sup> Astragalus is beneficial for Skin-Associated Lymphatic Tissue, boosting the immune system and potentially reducing congestion-related skin rashes.<sup>4</sup> Red root can improve fatigue and lymphatic-related digestive issues by cleansing the intestinal lymph ducts. Cleavers contains antioxidants and properties to stimulate activity in the lymphatic system, while cleansing the blood.<sup>5</sup>

**Drinking Water:** One of the most common reasons for lymphatic congestion, besides your body fighting an infection, is due to stagnation or dehydration. Make sure you're getting enough water throughout the day. Lymph is a clear-to-white liquid made of water, chyle (fluid from the intestines), proteins, and fat. Without consumption of water, the fluid does not flow well. To make sure you're hydrated, boil some filtered water and keep it in a thermos for the day, taking small sips of it every 15 minutes. This technique, recommended by Dr. John Douillard, will rehydrate the lymphatic system within just a few weeks.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Douillard, alongside Deepak Chopra, co-directed an Ayurvedic center. He also believes stress is an important factor contributing to lymphatic congestion, and encourages eating with the seasons and practicing stress-relief techniques.<sup>7</sup>

## 13 WAYS TO MOVE LYMPHATIC FLUIDS FROM HOME



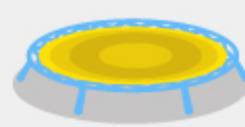
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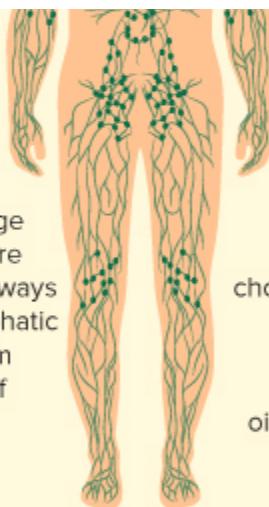
**REBOUNDING:**

Buy a small, personal-sized trampoline and bounce on it for 5-10 minutes a day. While burning a lot of calories and strengthening your skeletal system and muscles, this also works as a pump for your lymphatic fluid.

1



Though it is possible to get a professional lymph drainage massage, there are plenty of ways to move lymphatic fluid right from the comfort of your home.



body's natural drainage and detox capabilities.

Other lifestyle choices, like eating a clean diet, dry brushing, and using essential oils, can help, too.

2

### CASTOR OIL PACKS:

Pour a few tablespoons of cold-pressed, organic, hexane-free castor oil onto unbleached flannel and place it over your liver, which is found on the bottom of your right ribcage. Then, cover it with an old towel and an infrared heating pad (or any heat source). Relax for 30-60 minutes.



3

**FRANKINCENSE:**  
A few drops of Frankincense, with a carrier oil like jojoba or coconut oil, can be applied to lymph nodes to reduce swelling, encourage movement, and improve blood flow. WO China Healing Oil is another wonderful oil for the lymphatic system.



4

**DRY SKIN BRUSHING:**  
Using a natural bristle brush, glide over your skin, always moving toward your heart. Focus especially on places where lymph can become stagnant, like your armpits, neck, chest, and groin.



5

**HERBAL TEAS:**  
Warm herbal teas, like ginger, astragalus, or cleavers, can help stimulate lymphatic movement, as well as keeping you hydrated.



6

**DRINKING WATER:**  
One of the most common reasons for lymphatic congestion, besides your body fighting an infection, is due to stagnation or dehydration. Make sure you're getting enough water throughout the day.



7

**CLEAN DIET/JUICING:**  
Eating a clean diet, with minimal processed foods and plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits, will keep the lymph flowing and waste flushing from your body. Juicing low-sugar fruits and vegetables, like kale, chard, parsley, celery, ginger, lemon, watercress, and cilantro can help, too.



8

**BEETS:**  
Beets help thin the bile and cleanse the digestive system. They also contain betacyanin, a strong antioxidant that helps flush lymph.



9

**LYMPHATIC MASSAGE OR SELF-DRAINING MASSAGE:**

Either a massage done by a professional, or a self-draining massage can stimulate the lymphatic system physically, prompting it to drain.



10

**LEGS UP THE WALL:**

Lymphatic fluids flow counter to gravity, so any type of inversion is beneficial to encourage movement. While lying on the floor on your back, swing your legs straight up and rest the backs of your legs (from thighs to heel) against the wall for support, creating a 90-degree angle with your body. Do some deep breathing exercises and relax.



11

**YOGA:**

Yoga encourages types of movements that you might not do on a daily basis, like twists and stretches, which help your circulation.



12

**ANY EXERCISE OR MOVEMENT:**

Any type of exercise or movement, whether it be tai chi, walking, playing frisbee, or even weightlifting, is great for supporting movement of your lymphatic fluid.



13

**WARM EPSOM SALT BATHS:**

Epsom salt baths are an excellent detox tool to keep in your toolkit, since they also help promote drainage and stimulate circulation.



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**Clean Diet/Juicing:** Eating a clean diet, with minimal processed foods and plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits, will keep the lymph flowing and waste flushing from your body. Juicing low-sugar fruits and vegetables, like kale, chard, parsley, celery, ginger, lemon, watercress, and cilantro can help, too. Green vegetables are alkalizing, which also reduces the burden on your system. Our blood has a pH of about 7.4, which tips on the side of alkaline versus acidic (7 is a neutral pH, while 0 is the most acidic and 14 is the most alkaline). However, because of environmental factors, chronic illness, and an acid-heavy diet, many people have a low pH, trending toward acidic. Alkaline foods include broccoli, chard, cucumber, watercress, lettuce, and most green vegetables. Acidic foods, ones you'd likely want to avoid anyway because of their lack of nutrition and inflammatory properties, include corn, corn syrup, soda, artificial sweeteners, processed breads and cereals, frozen meals, and cakes for example. Acidic foods can trigger acid reflux, kidney stones,<sup>8</sup>, fibromyalgia and pain,<sup>9</sup> hormone imbalances, congested lymphatic fluid, and

other health issues, while alkaline foods can promote healing and lymphatic flow.

**Beets:** Beets help thin the bile and cleanse the digestive system. They also contain betacyanin, a strong antioxidant that helps flush lymph. Any red fruit or vegetable is used in holistic medicine as a lymph mover, so along with beets, reach for strawberries, raspberries, pomegranate, cranberries, cherries, and even turmeric to support your detoxification pathways.

**Lymphatic Massage or Self-draining Massage:** Either a massage done by a professional, or a self-draining massage can stimulate the lymphatic system physically, prompting it to drain. Lymphatic massage and myofascial release have helped patients with idiopathic and systemic pain find release, according to studies. Swedish massage, probably the most common type, which rubs muscles in long, sliding strokes, did not show the same mood-boosting, joint- and pain-relief benefits.<sup>10</sup> Instead of focusing on muscles and relaxation, a lymphatic massage instead targets the lymph nodes, promoting drainage, fluid movement, reduction of swelling, and congestion relief.

**Legs Up The Wall:** Much lymphatic fluids flow counter to gravity, so any type of inversion is beneficial to encourage natural movement. While lying on the floor on your back, swing your legs straight up and rest the backs of your legs (from thighs to heel) against the wall for support, creating a 90-degree angle with your body. Do some deep breathing exercises and relax. This is a great practice to do before bed, after a yoga practice, or if you're feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

**Yoga:** Yoga encourages types of movements that you might not do on a daily basis, like twists and stretches, which help your circulation. In particular, twists, leg lifts, inversions, and even classic sun salutations encourage varied movement on the mat, helpful for the lymphatic system. For chronically ill, cat-cow, downward dog, and forward bends are gentler poses that are still fantastic. Yoga is also beneficial for improving general circulation, which also, in turn, helps the lymph flow to remove toxins. Along with poses, breathwork, or pranayama, can encourage proper lymphatic function, especially in the stomach and chest. Deep breathing increases oxygen, and can also improve mood and energy, too. An easy way to test your breathing is to place your hand on your stomach and the other on your chest, while standing. Take a few normal breaths, and notice what happens in your body. Are you breathing through your chest? Did your shoulders or stomach move? Many people breathe shallowly, through the chest, when instead, we

should be breathing through the abdomen. Lying down and focusing on breathing through your belly can encourage lymphatic fluid to fill up the thoracic duct, located around the twelfth vertebrae to the base of the neck.

**Any Exercise or Movement:** Any type of exercise or movement, whether it be tai chi, walking, playing frisbee, or even weightlifting, is great for supporting movement of your lymphatic fluid. In a study on dogs, lymphatic flow was measured while dogs ran on a treadmill from 0-10 miles per hour. It took just one minute of exercise at 1.5 mph to notice a significant increase in lymphatic flow, which grew with each increase of speed.<sup>11</sup> The act of exercising can especially increase flow in the thoracic duct, or the Van Hoorne's canal, which is the biggest lymphatic vessel in the entire body, between 38-45 cms. Nearly three quarters of all lymph in the body must pass through this duct, including lower legs, abdomen, and the entire left side of the body. Aerobic exercise like walking or running, keeps this duct in particular, primed and functioning.

**Warm Epsom Salt Baths:** Epsom salt baths are an excellent detox tool to keep in your toolkit, since they also help promote drainage and stimulate circulation. Add 1-2 cups of Epsom salts to a warm bath. If you wish, you can add additional detoxification aids, like a few tablespoons of bentonite clay, apple cider vinegar, sea salt, or essential oils. Soak for 20-30 minutes, then rinse the salts off your body. You should feel relaxed afterward. If you have a negative reaction to Epsom salts (ie: you feel more fatigued or a little dizzy after), make sure the water isn't too hot. You can also switch to Magnesium Chloride flakes, which can also help up the magnesium levels in your body. You may be sensitive to sulfates (Epsom salts are magnesium *sulfate*), if you have certain gene SNPs (like CBS) and if your transsulfuration pathways are blocked. If even regular showers or baths aggravate your symptoms, you can add the same ingredients to a large tub and detox through a foot bath.

## Reduce Chemical Exposure in your Home and Environment

Your lymphatic system is like the trash removal service in your body. And when it's overburdened, we want to do our best to intake less "garbage" and give it less work to do. An important point about health of the lymphatic system, besides exercise and diet, also

includes looking to your environment.

Eliminating toxins in your home can be a huge help to your overall health and lymphatic health, especially with chronic illness. This means choosing organic produce and hormone- and antibiotic-free meats, ditching the chemical cleaners and perfume, finding cleaner alternatives to the makeup you wear.

## **Self-Massage for the Lymphatic System**

It's possible to do a self-massage on your head and neck to relieve swollen glands and promote lymphatic flow. You want the pressure to be gentle and light, rather than aggressive and strong. During or after the massage, you may feel drainage release from your nose and sinuses make its way down your throat. This is normal!

Most lymphatic massages involve circular motions on or around the lymph nodes, pumping them physically to help with movement and toxin removal.

Men and women might have different lymph nodes that become blocked and painful, due to physiological differences. Men, for example, may accumulate lymph in the inguinal nodes, near or above the front hip crease, due to activity in the prostate gland. Women, on the other hand, likely experience blocked, painful nodes in the axillary area, near the armpit toward the breast.<sup>12</sup>

## **Light Beam Therapy and Lymphatic System Light**

If home treatments aren't enough, certain medical practitioners and naturopaths provide Light Beam Therapy for the lymphatic system. These light beams are specially designed to aid the body in moving lymphatic fluid through negative-charge light photons and low currents.<sup>13</sup> During or after this therapy, stagnant lymph pathways should open up, releasing proteins and other fluids from the nodes and to the detoxification organs for processing.

The lymphatic system is a crucial part of the immune system, and one we don't often consider when tending to our health and wellness. Even if you don't experience chronic swelling, tender lymph nodes, congestion, itching, and weight gain, it's never too early to

start focusing on lymphatic health. Eating healthy and getting exercise is a great start, but consider some of the other tools mentioned here to optimize the flow of your lymphatic fluid and boost the health of your immune system. After all, you don't want it to get backed up!

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