Instructions for Self-Compression Wrap for Lymphedema

Compression wrapping improves the muscle pump, helps to decrease fibrotic tissue and promotes lymph drainage.

1. Moisturize the skin with a low acidity moisturizer such as Aquaphor, Eucerin or Johnson’s Baby Lotion

2. Stockinette: Used underneath the bandages to protect the skin from irritation of the bandages, and the bandages from perspiration.

3. Cut a slit for the thumb into the stockinette and pull it over the arm to your armpit. You should have about 2 to 3 inches left over at the top to pull over the bandages later. Pull the hand portion of the stockinette over wrist
To wrap your fingers:
Keep your fingers straight and apart. (3 A)
Use gauze bandages. Anchor loosely around your wrist 2 or 3 times (3B).
Keep bandage close. Wrap starting on the top of your hand and moving to the top of your finger at a point below the nail bed and wrapping the knuckle. (3C)
It does not matter which finger you start with. Overlap layers and anchor at the wrist after each finger. Continue to wrap each finger individually with circular turns starting each finger wrap from the top of your hand,(3D,3E) and going to the top of the finger.
Maintain a slight bit of tension on the bandage. You may need 2 to 3 gauze bandages depending on the size of your hand

4 Make a fist and look for “holes” or spaces in the bandage and make sure to cover any open areas.
5. Pull the stockinette over the hand and arm

6 Apply the Artiflex bandages. (6A)
These bandages serve to distribute the pressure evenly on the arm, and helps to pad the elbow crease and bony areas around the wrist and elbow.
Start at the hand making sure to cover the knuckles at the base of the fingers. (6A,6B,6C)
You may need to fold the Artiflex as you go through the web space of your thumb. (6D)
Then come up the wrist and make circular turns to the elbow. (6E) Try to get the hand, wrist and forearm all the same size. The idea is to make your arm look like a smooth column of uniform dimension. At the elbow make a “figure 8” (6F,6G,6H) and continue with a circular pattern above the elbow to the shoulder. (6J)
7. Start to apply the smallest bandage (usually 4 or 6 cm.) beginning at the wrist. (7A) Make a circle to anchor applying moderate tension. Come through the web space and over the knuckles several times. (7B, 7C) Proceed to come up toward the elbow making circular wraps and overlapping about ½ the width of the bandage on each turn. (9D)

8. Use the next size bandage. Switch directions. Squeeze to see if there are any soft spots. Start the bandage about an inch below the soft spot (or about 1/3 of the way up the forearm) (8A) Proceed with circular turns to the elbow, applying gradual and even pressure. At the elbow figure 8 the bandage. (8 B, C, D)
9. Proceed up the arm using progressively larger bandages (9 A, B) and switching directions with each new bandage. Finish 2 finger widths below the armpit. Make sure you can bend your elbow and touch your nose (9 C) Fold the remaining bit of stockinette over the top of the bandage.

Make sure to keep your arm moving and do your exercises with your bandages on.

Care of your bandages:

Your bandages may be washed in the washing machine in lukewarm water. It is best to put them in a pillow case or lingerie bag. Use a mild liquid detergent such as Ivory or Dreft. DO NOT USE POWDER detergents or WOOLITE. Bandages may be air dried or dried on a cool or delicate cycle in the dryer. Washing actually restores the elastic memory of the fibers in the bandages.

Ideally you should have 2 sets of bandages. One to wear while one is being washed. The bandages need to be replaced about every three months if worn nightly.