

POST-SURGICAL RECOVERY GUIDE · 10

Lymphatic drainage after arm lipo

Your arms feel heavy, tight and a little bruised.

And somehow the swelling seems to have travelled... down to your elbows, your wrists, even your hands.

That's gravity at work. Here's how we help it move the right way.

01

What's happening in your body

Lymph from your arms travels up toward the nodes in your armpits. Arm liposuction treats the fat layer where the smallest lymph vessels live, along a long stretch of the upper arm, so there's a lot of fluid to clear through a fairly narrow gateway.

When you're upright, gravity pulls that fluid down. That's why many people notice puffy elbows, forearms and hands in the first couple of weeks, even though nothing was done there.

Gentle drainage clears the armpit nodes first, then guides fluid from the hands and forearms up the arm and home. Left too long, protein-rich fluid can firm up into lumps or ridges along the upper arm, so early care matters for a smooth result.

Had lymph nodes removed from your armpit in the past, or have lipedema? Tell us before your surgery if you can. Arm lipo in these cases calls for a Certified Lymphedema Therapist and a more careful plan.

02

Your recovery timeline

WHEN	WHAT'S TYPICAL	HOW WE SUPPORT YOU
Days 1–4	Swelling and bruising peak. Compression sleeves on.	Rest, elevate, gentle hand pumps
Days 5–7	Heavy arms, swelling in elbows and hands	First session, with surgeon clearance
Weeks 2–4	Swelling easing, some firm spots along the upper arm	1–2 sessions per week. Sleeve fit check.
Weeks 4–8	Contour emerging, residual swelling by evening	Weekly or as needed. Fibrosis work if needed.
Months 2–6	Final shape settles	Tune-ups as needed

03

Your Renu arm lipo plan

First session: often 5–7 days after surgery, once your surgeon clears you.

How many sessions? Often 4–6 sessions over the first six weeks for arm lipo alone. If you had an arm lift (brachioplasty) with its longer incision, or larger volumes removed, expect 6–8.

Every session includes a check-in, tissue assessment of the upper arms, lymphatic drainage from the neck and armpits outward, help with your compression sleeves, and home-care coaching.

04

What a session feels like

You'll lie comfortably with your arms supported on pillows, slightly raised. We start with deep breathing and the neck, clear the armpits, then work from the upper arm down to the hand and back up with slow, feather-light strokes.

Most clients say their arms feel lighter by the end, and rings or sleeves often fit more easily afterwards.

05

What we will never do

- Push fluid out through incision ports
- Use deep pressure, heat or aggressive tools on fresh tissue
- Work over an arm lift incision before it's fully healed
- Treat through signs of infection or a blood clot

06

At home between sessions

- ☐ Wear your compression sleeves exactly as prescribed
- ☐ Elevate your arms on pillows when resting

- ☐ Gentle hand pumps: open and close your fists 10 times, several times a day
- ☐ Slow shoulder rolls and deep belly breathing
- ☐ Take rings off early, and keep them off until your hands settle
- ☐ Avoid heavy lifting and hot tubs until your surgeon clears you

WHEN TO GET MEDICAL HELP

Call your surgeon if...

- One arm suddenly becomes much more swollen, hard or painful than the other
- Fever over 38°C, chills or a racing heart
- Spreading redness, heat or red streaks
- Cloudy or foul-smelling drainage, or an incision that opens
- Numbness, tingling or colour change in your hand or fingers that isn't improving
- Chest pain or shortness of breath (call 911)

08 · QUESTIONS

Your questions, answered

How soon after arm lipo can I get lymphatic drainage?

Usually 5–7 days after surgery, once your surgeon clears you.

Why are my hands and elbows swollen after arm lipo?

Gravity pulls fluid down the arm while you're upright. It's common early on and usually settles with compression, elevation and drainage.

How many lymphatic sessions do I need after arm liposuction?

Often 4–6, or 6–8 after an arm lift or larger-volume lipo.

How long does swelling last after arm lipo?

Most visible swelling settles in a few weeks, but final contour can take two to six months.

I've had lymph nodes removed from my armpit. Is arm lipo safe?

Talk to your surgeon first. If you go ahead, work with a Certified Lymphedema Therapist before and after surgery to protect your lymphatic system.

Can lymphatic drainage help with lumps in my arms after lipo?

Yes. Early drainage helps prevent fibrosis, and gentle fibrosis techniques can soften lumps that have formed. See our fibrosis after liposuction guide.

WHY RENU

Not all "lymphatic massage" is the same.

After surgery, you're trusting someone with healing tissue. Here's what you get at Renu.

Led by a Certified Lymphedema Therapist with 10 years' experience. Our post-op and lymphedema program is led by Meeghan Mackenzie, RMT since 2005 and a Certified Lymphedema Therapist since 2016. Meeghan earned her CLT through the Academy of Lymphatic Studies' 135-hour Complete Lymphedema Certification, which covers Manual Lymph Drainage and Complete Decongestive Therapy, the same standard used to treat lymphedema after cancer. She is one of roughly 350 CLTs in Canada.

Trained in the world's leading lymphatic methods. Beyond her CLT, Meeghan has trained in:

- Vodder Manual Lymph Drainage, the original method developed by Dr. Emil Vodder and the foundation of lymphatic therapy worldwide
- Földi, the German school behind Complete Decongestive Therapy, named for the Földi Clinic in the Black Forest, one of Europe's leading lymphology centres
- Chikly Lymph Drainage Therapy, which teaches therapists to feel the rhythm, direction and depth of lymph flow, map pathways by hand, and work with scar tissue and fibrosis

That combination lets us choose the right approach for your body and your surgery, not a one-size-fits-all routine.

Over 20 years of hands-on experience, with a clinical focus on oncology, lymphedema and surgical recovery.

Registered Massage Therapy receipts for your extended health plan.

Honest care. We tell you what lymphatic work can do, what it can't, and when you need your surgeon instead.

What to look for in any post-op therapist:

- A regulated health licence (in Alberta, an RMT, physiotherapist, OT or nurse)
- Formal lymphatic or lymphedema certification, not a weekend course
- Light, comfortable technique. If it hurts, it isn't lymphatic drainage
- No pushing fluid out of incisions
- Clear, published pricing, and willingness to work with your surgeon

FOR YOU TO KEEP

My recovery notes

Bring this page to your sessions. It helps us plan your care around your surgeon's instructions.

PROCEDURE

SURGERY DATE

SURGEON AND CLINIC PHONE

CLEARED FOR LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE ON

COMPRESSION INSTRUCTIONS

SESSION DATE	HOW I'M FEELING · NOTES



GIVE FRESH LIFE OR STRENGTH TO.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Arms feeling heavy after lipo?

Let's lighten the load. Book at renu.janeapp.com or call 403-270-2111, and we'll help you plan your sessions around your surgery date.

BOOK ONLINE

renu.janeapp.com

CALL

403-270-2111

VISIT

200, 209 19 St NW
Calgary AB T2N 2H9

HOURS

Monday to Friday 8:00 am to 8:30 pm
Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

EMAIL

admin@renuhealth.ca

ONLINE

renuhealth.ca
[@renuhealthyc](https://www.instagram.com/renuhealthyc)

This guide is general education to support your recovery. It doesn't replace the advice of your surgeon or medical team. Always follow your surgeon's instructions, and seek medical care for any of the warning signs listed in this guide.

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