

# PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

## Osteopathic Home Exercises for Caregivers of COVID-19 Patients

Abby Rhoads, DO

*Ronald Januchowski, DO, FACOFP, Editor • Paula Gregory, DO, MBA, CHCQM, FAIHQ, Health Literacy Editor*

### DAY ONE:

Please perform treatment for the first time during a telehealth visit with an osteopathic physician (DO). Begin with one treatment from the five described in this education handout. If the patient has increased coughing due to the treatment, you can end the treatment early. Also, if the patient feels any pain, then stop what you are doing.

### SUBSEQUENT DAYS:

You can perform all five techniques up to twice a day until the COVID-19 symptoms improve.

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Try to limit the treatment time to less than 10 minutes; each of the five treatments should take less than two minutes.
2. These techniques are ideal if you have two or more people in your household who are sick and COVID-19 positive. If there is only one patient COVID-19 positive and the caregiver is not sick, it is ideal for both the patient and the caregiver to wear a mask (fabric is fine) during the treatment. If only one mask is available, have the sick person wear it to avoid coughing near the caregiver's face. The caregiver should wash their hands with soap and water for two minutes immediately after treatment.

### TREATMENT 1:

#### SUBOCCIPITAL RELEASE (PARASYMPATHETIC) RELEASE

#### PURPOSE:

To help balance your nervous system, decrease cough and loosen mucus

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Have the patient lie on their back on a couch or across a bed, with the caregiver sitting at the patient's head.
2. Feel the spine in the neck until you reach the base of the skull.
3. Place your fingers at the base of the skull, as shown in Image 1.
4. Advise your patient to relax their head down into your fingers, as shown in Image 2.
5. Hold this for 30 seconds to one minute.

IMAGE 1:<sup>1</sup>



IMAGE 2:<sup>1</sup>



SOURCE(S): 1. *Atlas of Osteopathic Techniques* 2. ACOFP OMTotal Video Library

The *Osteopathic Family Physician Patient Handout* is a public service of the ACOFP. The information and recommendations appearing on this page are appropriate in many instances; however, they are not a substitute for medical diagnosis by a physician. For specific information concerning your medical condition, ACOFP suggests that you consult your family physician. This page may be photocopied noncommercially by physicians and other healthcare professionals to share with their patients.

### DOWNLOAD AND DISTRIBUTE

The PDF of this patient education handout is available for easy download and distribution to your patients at [www.acofp.org/PEH](http://www.acofp.org/PEH).

## TREATMENT 2: THORACIC INLET RELEASE (LYMPHATIC TECHNIQUE)

### PURPOSE:

To open up the pathway to drain the lymphatic system (improves the immune system)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The patient sits in a chair with a caregiver standing behind.
2. Place your thumbs where the neck meets the patient's shoulders with the rest of your hand on the chest, as shown in Image 3.
3. Rotate clockwise and counterclockwise with enough pressure to feel the skin move under your hands (like driving a car with a steering wheel).
4. Rotate your hands towards the right, in a clockwise fashion (moving the skin underneath), and have the patient take a deep breath in. As they take a breath out, move more towards the right, gently.
5. Do the same approach in the other direction. Rotate your hands towards the left, in a counterclockwise fashion (moving the skin underneath). Have the patient take a deep breath in and, as they take a breath out, move more towards the left.
6. Alternative: This can be done with the patient lying on a couch with their head on the couch arm (or lying in bed) with you standing or sitting above, as shown in Image 4.

IMAGE 3:<sup>1</sup>

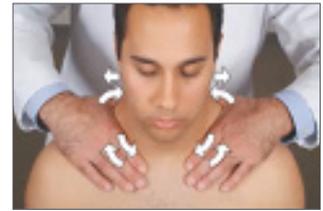


IMAGE 4:<sup>2</sup>



## TREATMENT 3: PECTORAL TRACTION (LYMPHATIC TECHNIQUE)

### PURPOSE:

To assist moving lymph through the body and help move immune cells to fight infections

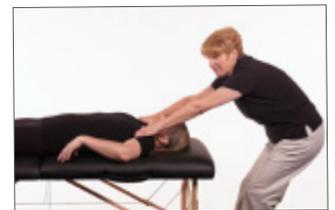
### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The patient can lay diagonally across the bed on their back so the caregiver can access their feet and head or the patient can lay on a couch with their head resting on the couch arm.
2. Take four fingers (not including the thumb) of both hands and make a hook, with your fingers going into the patient's armpits. See Image 5.
3. Hold on and lean backward. As the patient takes a deep breath, continue to lean back and gently pull your hands back towards yourself. See Image 6.
4. Continue holding as the patient takes three to five breaths in and out.

IMAGE 5:<sup>1</sup>



IMAGE 6:<sup>2</sup>



## TREATMENT 4: PEDAL PUMP (LYMPHATIC TECHNIQUE)

### PURPOSE:

To assist moving cells that fight infection throughout the lymphatic system

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The patient lies on the couch on their back or in bed so that the caregiver can access the feet.
2. Stand at the end of a couch or bed where your patient's feet are and place your hands on each foot, as shown in Image 7.
3. Gently push at the bottom of their feet in a rhythmic motion towards your patient, as shown in Image 8. The patient should feel their abdomen giggle.
4. Alternatively, you can grasp their ankle bones and push forward and back in a rhythmic motion, enough for the patient to feel the abdomen giggle.

IMAGE 7:<sup>1</sup>



IMAGE 8:<sup>2</sup>



SOURCE(S): 1. *Atlas of Osteopathic Techniques* 2. *ACOFP OMTotal Video Library*

The *Osteopathic Family Physician Patient Handout* is a public service of the ACOFP. The information and recommendations appearing on this page are appropriate in many instances; however, they are not a substitute for medical diagnosis by a physician. For specific information concerning your medical condition, ACOFP suggests that you consult your family physician. This page may be photocopied noncommercially by physicians and other healthcare professionals to share with their patients.

**TREATMENT 5:**  
**RIB RAISING**  
(SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM, RIB MOTION, LYMPHATIC TECHNIQUE)

**PURPOSE:**

To loosen thick mucus, open the lungs that will help the patient breathe and stimulate the nerves to their lungs.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Instruct the patient to sit on a couch or chair; the caregiver stands in front of them.
2. Place their arms over the caregiver's shoulders and rest their head in your chest. See Image 9.
3. Place your hands on their mid-back along both sides of the spine. See Image 9.
4. Move your hands toward yourself and lift in a rhythmic fashion, moving up and down the spine. See Image 10.

IMAGE 9:<sup>1</sup>



IMAGE 10:<sup>2</sup>



**SOURCE(S):** 1. *Atlas of Osteopathic Techniques* 2. *ACOFP OMTotal Video Library*

The *Osteopathic Family Physician* Patient Handout is a public service of the ACOFP. The information and recommendations appearing on this page are appropriate in many instances; however, they are not a substitute for medical diagnosis by a physician. For specific information concerning your medical condition, ACOFP suggests that you consult your family physician. This page may be photocopied noncommercially by physicians and other healthcare professionals to share with their patients.