

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## **Yoga research for breast cancer sufferers**

The University of Tasmania is beginning research to determine whether yoga can help women who have lymphoedema following surgery or radiotherapy for breast cancer.

Masters student and yoga therapist Annette Loudon is calling for 20 Hobart-based volunteers and the same number from Launceston to be involved in yoga classes over eight weeks in March and April this year.

“There is no published research in this area,” Annette said. “But women with lymphoedema told me yoga helps them so I’ve decided to do scientific research on it.”

“The yoga classes will be in the evening for 90 minutes once a week over the eight weeks; I will give the women a DVD specially made for this research so they can practise between classes.”

Ms Loudon uses specific yoga practices to help women with lymphoedema, which causes incurable swelling and pain in the arm. Yoga may be a tool for self-management of symptoms, as well as making women feel better.

Women involved in the study will be measured four times during the research for lymphoedema, arm mobility and strength, and well-being. It does not matter how long they have had lymphoedema.

Volunteers should:

- Have lymphoedema as a result of treatment for breast cancer;
- Be over 18 years old;
- Not currently be undergoing radiotherapy, chemotherapy or complex lymphoedema therapy.

No experience of yoga is necessary.

Women who wish to be involved in the research should contact Annette Loudon, ph. 63244031 or email [aloudon@postoffice.utas.edu.au](mailto:aloudon@postoffice.utas.edu.au).

Ms Loudon is studying with the UTAS University Department of Rural Health, in conjunction with Flinders University and the University of South Australia.

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## Lymphodema Facts

- 20 per cent of women who have had treatment for breast cancer get secondary lymphoedema, which is incurable;
- Lymphoedema affects women differently and to varying extents;
- Lymphoedema causes swelling in the arm which if untreated will increase; the consistency of the arm tissue can harden and the skin can change to a 'brawny' colour. Women also report symptoms such as pain, heaviness, discomfort, pins and needles and arm impairment;
- Lymphoedema affects the lifestyles of women who have it, determining activities such as exercise, driving and other physical activities involving the arms;
- It can also cause fatigue and embarrassment, affecting women's self esteem and at times social activities;
- Treatment is known as *complex lymphodema therapy*, which involves specialised massage by trained lymphoedema therapists, specific exercises for self-management and the wearing of a compression sleeve. If left untreated the arm can swell more.