

Weight Management

- Being overweight can limit how much improvement in your swelling that can be achieved. Being a healthy weight can make managing lymphoedema easier.
- Being overweight can also increase your risk of getting cellulitis.
- If you are overweight and would like to lose weight, please speak to a member of the Lymphoedema Team for support services available.

Lymphoedema Service Contact details

You can contact the Lymphoedema Service on:

Tel: 01752 435678

Email: livewell.lymphoedemaservice@nhs.net

Website: www.livewellswsouthwest.co.uk/project/lymphoedema

Other Useful Sources of Information

Lymphoedema Support Network

Tel: 020 7351 44 80

www.lymphoedema.org

British Lymphology Society

Tel: 01452 790178

www.thebls.com

NHS Information Website: Lymphoedema

Lymphoedema



Managing your lymphoedema

What is Lymphoedema?

Lymphoedema is a swelling caused by a problem with the Lymphatic System. It can affect any part of the body. It is more commonly seen in arms and legs. Most causes of Lymphoedema cannot be reversed. The right treatment can reduce it and make it less of a problem.

What is the Lymphatic System?

The Lymphatic System consists of vessels and lymph nodes. This is part of your immune system. It helps your body to deal with infections. It is also a waste disposal system. Bacteria, waste products and fluid are taken away from the body's tissues. These waste products pass through your kidneys and are passed out in your urine.

Types and Causes of Lymphoedema

Primary: This can be due to the lymphatic system not developing properly at birth. It can show as swelling later in life. This often happens at times of hormone changes, e.g. puberty, childbirth, and menopause.

Secondary: This is caused by damage or something stopping the lymphatic system working properly, such as Surgery – especially where lymph nodes are removed, Radiotherapy, Trauma, Infection such as Cellulitis, Reduced Mobility, Obesity and Active Cancer.

Treatment

The main part of managing Lymphoedema is through self-management. There are four parts to this:

1. **Skin Care**
2. **Compression Garments**
3. **Exercise**
4. **Simple Lymphatic Drainage (SLD) Massage**

1. Compression Garments

Compression garments help to reduce and control the amount of swelling. They come in many shapes, sizes, materials and colours. Once a suitable garment has been fitted, you will be given two garments every 6 months. Most of the garments can be washed on a gentle wash cycle up to 40c, but no fabric conditioner should be used and the garment shouldn't be dried in a tumble dryer. If the garment has stopped fitting properly, becomes uncomfortable or is marking your limb, please contact our service.

You may be offered more intensive treatment with compression bandages or wraps prior to having a compression hosiery.

2. Skin Care

Preventing the skin from being damaged or becoming dry, helps to prevent the skin becoming infected (known as cellulitis):

Apply a non-perfumed moisturiser to your skin at least once daily. Avoid getting any cuts or burns to the skin. It can help to use sunscreen, wear gardening gloves, Use an electric razor instead of other hair removal methods. Try to avoid having your blood pressure, injections or blood taken from your swollen limb. If you get a cut; keep it Clean, Cover with a dressing and check it regularly.

3. Exercise

Exercising while wearing your compression garments, makes the compression more effective. This can be simple joint circulating exercises or other activities you enjoy, such as swimming or walking. Before starting new exercise, talk to your healthcare professional.

4. Simple Lymphatic Drainage

You can perform regular very gentle massage can help to help reduce the swelling in the affected area. Please speak to the team.

You may be offered a course of massage - MLD or Intermittent compression pump