Lymphoedema / Lipoedema

Patient Information Leaflet

Contact
Lymphoedema/Lipoedema Services
Southway Clinic, Inchkeith Road, Southway, Plymouth, PL6 6EJ
Tel: 01752 435678
Email: livewell.lymphoedemaservice@nhs.net

Information about Lymphoedema and Lipoedema

Lymphoedema
Swelling caused by a build-up of fluid in the body's tissues due to a reduced or damaged lymphatic system.

Lipoedema
A long-term condition causing abnormal fat distribution, usually in the legs (and sometimes arms), often with pain and tenderness. In some circumstances this can lead to a build up of fluid causing swlling.

Both conditions are long-term but can be **well managed with the right care and support**.

Why have I been given this leaflet?

We want to support you in self-care and provide you with the information to keep well.

Skin care
Healthy skin helps prevent infection:
- Wash daily with warm water and mild soap
- Dry skin carefully, especially in folds
- Moisturise every day (use non-perfumed creams)
- Check your skin regularly for:
  - Redness
  - Cracks
  - Changes or signs of infection

Compression (if prescribed)
- Wear your compression garments as advised
- Ensure they fit properly and feel comfortable
- Replace garments when needed

Exercise and movement
- Keep active (walking, swimming, gentle exercise)
- Avoid sitting or standing still for long periods
- Elevate your limb when resting (if possible)

Healthy lifestyle
- Eat a balanced, healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol

Self-management
You may be advised to:
- Use simple lymphatic drainage (SLD)
- Practice breathing exercises
- Follow positioning advice

Please ask the clinician at your next appointments.

You will be given advice to keep you safe.

Managing Pain (especially for lipoedema)
- Gentle movement and compression can help to reduce the pain by supporting the limb
- Avoid injury or pressure to affected areas
- Speak to your clinician if pain worsens

Cellulitis - important information

What is Cellulitis?
Cellulitis is a **bacterial skin infection** that can develop quickly and become serious if not treated promptly. People with lymphoedema or lipoedema are at **higher risk**.

Signs and symptoms of Cellulitis
- Redness or spreading rash
- Skin feels hot or painful
- Swelling increases suddenly
- Fever, chills, or flu-like symptoms
- Feeling unwell or tired

These symptoms can appear quickly and may worsen over hours.

How to help prevent Cellulitis

- Keep skin clean and well moisturised
- Treat dry or cracked skin promptly
- Protect skin from cuts, bites, or scratches
- Wear appropriate footwear in and outdoors
- Use insect repellent if needed
- Follow your compression and skincare routine

If you cut or damage your skin

- Clean the area immediately with clean water
- Apply antiseptic if available
- Cover with a clean dressing
- Monitor for signs of infection

When to seek urgent help

Please seek urgent medical attention if you experience any of the following:

- Signs of infection with fever, including shivering, hot and cold sweats, extreme tiredness, nausea, diarrhoea, new confusion, or feeling generally very unwell. These symptoms may indicate sepsis, which requires immediate treatment.
- Any sudden change in your limb, including rapid deterioration or unexpected symptoms.
- Sudden swelling, pain, increased warmth or tenderness, or a limb that feels unusually cold. Skin breakdown or leaking These may be signs of a serious condition requiring urgent assessment.

If your symptoms are severe or worrying, please contact **NHS 111** for advice, or **999** in an emergency.

When to contact the Lymphoedema / Lipoedema Service?

Please contact us **Monday to Friday, 08:30–16:00**, if you experience:

- Poorly fitting garments
- Discomfort or pain
- Increased swelling
- Skin irritation
- Garment slippage
- Recurrent infections, including cellulitis
- Any other concerns affecting your condition or comfort

If you contact our service an administrator will ask you about your condition. Additionally, you will be asked to complete a Patient Requesting Appointment Questionnaire. Should you require support we can help you with this.

This information will be passed promptly to a clinician and will contact you if necessary.

Support and advice

Please ensure you follow the support and advice given, this includes the wearing of any compression hosiery or garments.

Reordering of compression hosiery / garments

If you require routine replacement of your prescribed compression garments, we provide **two garments every six months**. Please contact the service using the telephone number above to arrange this.

Self-managing your condition

Please visit our website at:
www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/lymphoedema for specific Lymphoedema/Lipoedema information, advice and support.

Or visit the Livewell Southwest website at: www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk where you will find a range of information and advice related to improving your physical, mental and social wellbeing.

NHS Primary Patient Advice

NHS website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/lymphoedema

- Overview of lymphoedema
- Symptoms, causes, and treatment options
- When to seek help

Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN)

Website: www.lymphoedema.org

- Provides information, support, and patient resources

Lipoedema UK

Website: https://lipoedema.co.uk

- Advice, peer support, and education

British Lymphology Society (BLS)

Website: www.thebls.com

- Clinical guidance and patient information

Should you decide you no longer wish to receive this treatment, please contact our Lymphoedema Service on the number overleaf.

Scan this QR code to visit the Lymphoedema service on the Livewell Southwest website.

If you wish to comment on this leaflet, please contact livewell.lymphoedema@nhs.net.