

Patient information

Lymphoedema guidance on daily care

Skin care (Cornerstone 1)

Please remember skin care is vital part of your Lymphoedema self management.

Follow good hygiene with daily moisturising with a non-perfumed moisturiser. This will minimize the risk of infection from dry cracked skin which is at risk from bacteria.

Moisturise starting at the route of the limb, heading down the limb but in a upward motion.

Please note to pay **attention** to areas such as under the breasts, in the groin or genital region, between the toes and any deep folds or scars.

In areas where the swelling is present, **try to avoid:**

- Injections or infusions
- Giving or having blood taken
- Cuts, grazes, insect bites and stings
- Scratches from pets or environment
- Changes in temperature (this can increase the swelling)
- Very hot or cold baths or showers
- Burns or scolds
- Sunburn
- Direct contact with snow or ice
- Deep tissue massage
- Tight clothing or jewellery

External support/compression (Cornerstone 2)

Compression therapy is part of the mainstay of treatment and vital part of your self-management.

Compression provides graduated, even pressure to the limb to limit the formation of lymph and also helps to reduce swelling/oedema. It requires movement to be effective due to the muscle pump action.

Compression hosiery should feel firm, supportive and comfortable. It should stop the feeling of an ache in your limb. If you experience any colour change in your fingers or toes, or pain/numbness, remove immediately and contact the service

Please follow the care and advice below:

- Wash with no fabric softener
- Do not dry on direct heat source
- Try to only wear once a day before washing
- Use donning/doffing aid (if issued with one)
- Relining your garment
- Do not alter the garment (cut, stretch or modify) this will alter compression
- Seek new garment after 6 months
- Wear garment during exercise
- Wear in the morning and skin care in evening

Do not wear your compression garment if you have an infection.

Application is advised early morning and removed last thing at night, unless specific instructions have been given by your nurse/therapist.

Exercise and movement (Cornerstone 3)

Exercise and movement is another vital self-management tool. It is also very important and improving muscle strength, cardiovascular function, physical mobility and psychological wellbeing.

Your lymphatic system does not have a natural pump like your circulatory system does with your heart. It requires movement or contraction of the muscle to pump the fluid around the body.

This is why exercise and movement is vital to reducing oedema and improving health and wellbeing.

During your assessment /workshop appointments, simple exercises will be discussed and prescribed to best support and manage your oedema but examples of exercises can be found below:

- Home exercises e.g. sitting or standing
- Walking with/without pets
- Swimming
- Breathing exercises
- Strength/resistance training
- Aerobic exercise that uses the upper body
- Dancing/Zumba
- Yoga, Pilates and Tripudio

Exercise on referral schemes (local gyms)

Please remember to wear your compression hosiery when exercising or most active as this will make the 'muscle pump action' more effective.

Elevation of the limb (arm/leg) is recommended when resting, try not to sleep with your legs down this will lead to an increase in swelling. Resting your arm on a pillow or cushion supporting the hand will minimise the swelling on the upper limb.

Simple deep breathing exercises are a fantastic way of helping to manage your oedema, breathing exercises help to change the pressure in your thoracic region thus aiding drainage to that area.

Please seek guidance from your clinician for advice

Simple lymphatic drainage (SLD) (Cornerstone 4)

(SLD) is a simple form of self-massage, adapted from the complex technique of Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD).

If you perform this technique daily then it will stimulate the lymphatic system on a regular basis. It should take you approximately 20 minutes to perform and you can carry out this technique whilst wearing your compression hosiery.

This will be taught at the self-management workshop.

Useful information and websites

Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN)

St Luke's Crypt, Sydney Street, London, SW3 6NH

Telephone: 020 7351 4480 (for information and support)

Telephone: 020 7351 0990 (administration)

e-mail: adminlsn@lyphoedema.freeserve.co.uk

Website: www.lymphoedema.org

British Lymphoedema Society (BLS)

The Garth House, Rushey Lock, Tadpole Bridge, Buckland Marsh, Nr Farringdon, Oxfordshire, SN7 8RF

Telephone: 01452 790178

e-mail: info@thebls.com or visit BLS website

Macmillan Cancer Support

Telephone: 0808 808 00 00 (Monday to Friday 9.00am – 8.00pm)

Or visit their website www.macmillan.org.uk

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>

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