

## Patient information

# Intermittent pneumatic compression (IPC)

## What is intermittent pneumatic compression (IPC)?

With lymphoedema treatment, we are trying to soften the fluid and encourage the lymphoedema into an area where it can drain.

In terms of IPC, this is a safe and effective method frequently used to prevent deep venous thrombosis (DVT) in hospitalised patients as well, as lymphoedema.

Intermittent pneumatic compression actively compresses the leg, mimicking the action of the leg muscle pumps.

Devices may have one or more chambers and consist of a pneumatic pump that inflates air into garments wrapped around the foot, calf, thigh or a combination of the three.



Multiple chamber devices provide sequential compression in an ascending pattern up the limb.

Pumps vary in timing cycles and amount of pressure produced, ranging from low-pressure, slow inflation to high-pressure, rapid inflation devices.

## What the service provides

As with many other services around the country we use IPC pump therapy as an acute course of treatment. This will be an additional course along with either the four cornerstones of management and/or a package of decongestive lymphatic therapy (DLT).

The course of treatment will be 6 sessions, which are twice a week for 3 weeks. Each session lasts between 45 mins to an hour. The clinician assessing will

prescribe the area of treatment and also the initial starting pressure but this will be assessed at each session by the clinician running the clinic.

## **Contraindications**

**As with any medical treatment, there are contraindications for the use of IPC which the clinician will advise before prescribing:**

- Any patient undergoing active, curative treatment such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy. It may be used on those undergoing palliative treatments at the specialist's discretion. IPC therapy may be commenced one-month post radiotherapy, as long as the skin is intact and there is no inflammation present
- Metastatic disease affecting the oedematous region
- Known, untreated deep vein thrombosis or within six weeks of treatment - pulmonary embolism or thrombophlebitis
- An acute inflammation of the skin, e.g. cellulitis
- Uncontrolled/severe cardiac/renal/liver failure
- Ischaemic vascular disease
- Severe peripheral neuropathy
- Pulmonary oedema
- Open wounds +/- lymphorrhoea
- Unable to attend for the agreed treatment course

**We will also treat with caution if:**

- Peripheral neuropathy
- Pain or numbness in the limb
- Fragile skin
- Graft sites
- Skin conditions that may be aggravated by IPC
- Extreme limb deformity
- Patient with lipoedema will be assessed to see if suitable for treatment due to pain levels in the limbs

**Treatment will be stopped if a patient experiences:**

- Sudden onset of chest pain or breathlessness
- Any numbness in the limb or acute sudden pain

- Sudden onset of dizziness

## **General advice and guidance**

- Please complete simple lymphatic drainage (SLD) prior to your sessions
- Please wear comfortable clothing (ie joggers or leggings), no jeans please
- Please use the toilet prior to attending as use can cause increase urination
- Please bring a book / magazine or music along as the sessions last 45mins to an hour

## **For further information**

Please contact the Lymphoedema Service on: 01284 712732  
or email: [wslymphservice@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:wslymphservice@wsh.nhs.uk)

## **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 for administration  
e-mail: [adminlsn@lyphoedema.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:adminlsn@lyphoedema.freereserve.co.uk)  
Website: [www.lymphoedema.org](http://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](mailto:info@thebls.com) or visit BLS website: [thebls.com](http://thebls.com)

### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

Telephone 0808 808 00 00 (Monday to Friday 9.00am – 8.00pm) or visit their website  
[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)*

<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



© West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust