

## Useful Contacts

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If you have been diagnosed with Lymphoedema there are a number of health professionals and organisations that can help you manage your condition.

Listed below are websites available to provide more help and advice.

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**GP** Telephone Number

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**District Nurse** Telephone Number

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**Other** Telephone Number

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- **Lymphoedema Support Network** Tel: 020 7351 44 80  
<http://www.Lymphoedema.org/index.php/information-and-support/what-is-Lymphoedema>
- **Cancer related Lymphoedema** Tel: 0808 808 00 00  
<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/Lymphoedema>
- **Non-Cancer related** Tel: 0800 22 44 88  
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/blood-and-lymph/Lymphoedema>
- **Lipoedema UK** Email:  
<http://www.lipoedema.co.uk/> [info@lipoedema.co.uk](mailto:info@lipoedema.co.uk)
- **British Lymphology Society** Tel: 01452 790178  
<https://thebls.com/>



## NHS FIFE

# Management of Lymphoedema

## Patient Leaflet



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### 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 can't be reversed. The right treatment can reduce it and make it less of a problem.

### What is your 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. These pass through your kidneys and are passed out as urine.

### Treatment

The main part of managing your Lymphoedema is self management. There are four main parts to this;

- Simple Lymphatic Drainage massage
- Skin Care
- Compression Garment
- Exercise

### Types / 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.

- Surgery – especially where lymph nodes are removed
- Radiotherapy
- Trauma that damages lymphatics
- Infection such as Cellulitis
- Reduced mobility
- Obesity
- Active Cancer

### Simple Lymphatic Drainage

- Very gentle massage can help reduce the swelling in the affected area.
- You may be taught a very specific massage by a Lymphoedema specialist

### Skin Care

- Prevent the skin from being damaged or becoming dry
- Rub a non-perfumed moisturiser into your skin at least once daily
- Avoid getting sun burnt, use sun screen
- Use gloves when gardening to prevent scratches
- If necessary, use an electric razor to shave swollen area (s)
- Try to avoid having your blood pressure, injections or blood taken from affected limb
- Use insect repellent when required

### Exercise

- Regular movement of the affected area helps to improve the circulation
- Exercising wearing your compression garments makes the compression garment more effective. This can be from gentle circulatory exercises or activities you enjoy e.g. swimming or walking. Before starting a new exercise, talk to your healthcare professional.

### Compression Garments

- Compression garments help to reduce and control the amount of swelling
- They come in many shapes, sizes and material.
- They should be replaced at least every 6 months
- A poor fitting garment can do more harm than good. You should be properly assessed by a professional
- If the garment has stopped fitting properly or is marking your limb – go back to your health care professional. These are usually worn during the day and taken off overnight. Any special advice for you will be given to you by a professional.

### Weight Management

- Being overweight can have a big impact on Lymphoedema.

Being overweight may limit how much improvement in your swelling can be achieved.

You should aim for a healthy weight. Weight loss advice can be given by your GP.