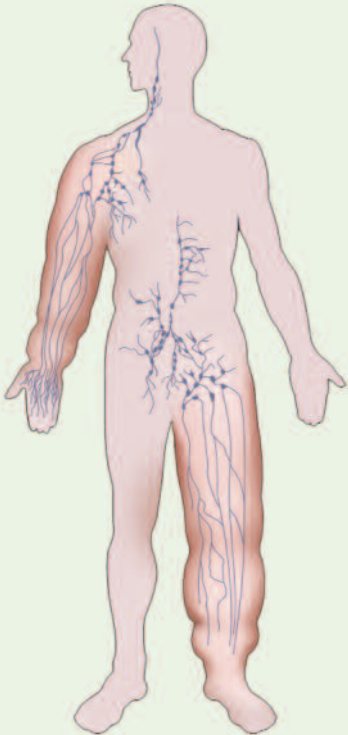


How to Manage Lymphoedema at Home and at Work



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Occupations, in the broadest sense, are all the ordinary and familiar things that we do every day, which we take for granted until we become ill, such as housework, shopping, hobbies, caring for others and working.

Occupational Therapy is the process of looking at everyday tasks to improve independence and quality of life. Lymphoedema and its management can greatly impact on your daily occupations. If you have lymphoedema, not being able to do what you want to do can be very frustrating. Whatever our occupations are, as long as they support feelings of identity, normality and well-being, then they are to be valued and, in the presence of illness or disability, this is what occupational therapy aims to restore.

***Work does not necessarily mean paid employment.
It can mean voluntary work, education and learning, caring
duties or household duties etc.***

Strategies to Help at Work and Home

Early strategies to achieve personal responsibility are imperative for long term success, that is, be motivated and show initiative about working. You should be encouraged to return to your usual activities gradually and within your comfort zone.

A discussion should happen with your employer before you return to work to allow you to return safely and to facilitate any reasonable adjustments to be made.

General areas for reasonable adjustment include workplace ergonomics, repetitive tasks, working hours and phased return to work and/or allocation of duties including driving responsibilities.

It is advisable to contact your local Department of Employment office for support and advice. Various schemes are available to help you. Work advice and work assessment can include the duties of the post, job demand analysis, workplace assessment or workstation assessment.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. In 2005 this act was extended to cover those people living with, and in remission from cancer, from the point of diagnosis onwards.

The Money Advice Service and Citizens Advice Bureau are also useful contacts.

Educate yourself, your employer, colleagues, family and friends.

Lymphoedema Treatment Considerations

If you are attending for appointments with a lymphoedema practitioner, you will need to arrange this time out with your employer, to ensure you are able to attend all of the sessions. At the start, this may include 1-2 hours, 2-5 times per week. This time will need to be negotiated with your employer but the therapist will work with you to find a time that is most suitable for all parties.

Compression garments are a routine part of the management of lymphoedema and they may affect your choice of clothing for work or affect your uniform. It is worth noting that the garments may also affect your temperature control. Hormone treatments may also affect temperature.

Infection control is another issue which should be considered if the garment may affect hand washing, food management etc, for example, in a clinical setting or in a restaurant kitchen. This may mean that the employee may want to discuss changing the role of the post to adapt it to what can reasonably be achieved taking the garment into account.



Equipment

Sometimes a few pieces of equipment may help you manage your lymphoedema independently. The following is a list of some equipment possibilities, available through a range of local private suppliers, Community Occupational Therapy or District nursing.

Perching Stools - for use at the wash basin, kitchen sink or ironing board



Kitchen trolleys – to avoid excessive carrying



Footstools – for leg elevation



Leg lifting devices – to help assist heavier legs, either into bed or into the car

Foam wedges – for leg elevation whilst in bed



Riser / recliner chairs



Toileting equipment and continence aids



Range of bathing and showering equipment



Long handled washing and dressing aids



Aids to don lymphoedema garments



Small aids for the kitchen – for improved hand dexterity and safety



Feeding aids and adapted cutlery



Wheelchairs

Pressure care products



Walking aids

Contacts and Suppliers

Local Community Occupational Therapy Offices and District Nursing Teams

Lymphoedema Network Northern Ireland - www.lnni.org

British Lymphology Society - www.thebls.com

Lymphoedema Support Network (National) - www.lymphoedema.org/lsn

Lymph (Northern Ireland Support Group (Renamed 2013)) - www.nilsg.co.uk

College of Occupational Therapy - www.cot.co.uk

Access to Work Scheme - www.nidirect.gov.uk/access-to-work-practical-help-at-work

Disabled Living Foundation Factsheets - www.dlf.org.uk/content/factsheets-groups

Work Support Route Guide Northern Ireland, Macmillan
<http://be.macmillan.org.uk/downloads/cancerinformation/workandcancer/worksupportrouteguideni.pdf>

Department for Employment www.delni.gov.uk/ (028) 9025 7777

Private Purchase Suppliers

This is not an exhaustive list and other suppliers are available regionally and nationally. These are some examples:

- Argos Catalogue, branches province-wide - www.argos.co.uk
- Ways and Means Catalogue - www.nrs-uk.co.uk/aids-for-daily-living-catalogue
- Redcross Wheelchair Loan Service - www.redcross.org.uk/nearyou
- Wiltshire Farm Foods - www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com
- Footwear Options - www.cosyfeet.com
- Lisclare Limited - 38 Montgomery Rd Belfast BT6 9HL (028) 9079 4000
- S&E Supplies - Rathenraw Industrial Estate Antrim BT41 2SJ (028) 9446 2233
- Tools for Living (Ireland) Ltd - Pennybridge Ind Estate Ballymena BT42 3HB (028) 2563 0406

- John Preston & Co (Belfast) Ltd - Blaris Ind Estate Lisburn BT27 5QB (028) 9244 2947
- Disability Needs - 1 York Rd Belfast ((028)) 9002 5610
- Fred Storey (Belfast) Ltd - 2 Glen Rd Comber BT23 5EL (028) 9187 0033
- Castlecare Mobility - Seskilgreen Dungannon BT70 2DD (028) 8556 7888
- Moorings Mediquip - Slaght Rd Ballymena BT42 2JH (028) 2556 8212
- Odel (Irl) Ltd - 1 Hillview Terrace Banbridge BT32 4DH (028) 4033 1416
- Disabled Bathing Services - Belfast Rd Bangor BT20 3PX (028) 9124 0942
- 3R Mobility - Flurry Bridge Business Pk Newry BT35 8SQ (028) 3084 8995
- Mobility Ireland (Dalys) - 2 Somerset Pk Coleraine BT51 3LH (028) 7032 6550

*Developed by the Lymphoedema Network Northern Ireland
in partnership with the Occupational Therapy Department at the Cancer Centre
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*

Printed 2014 Review 2017