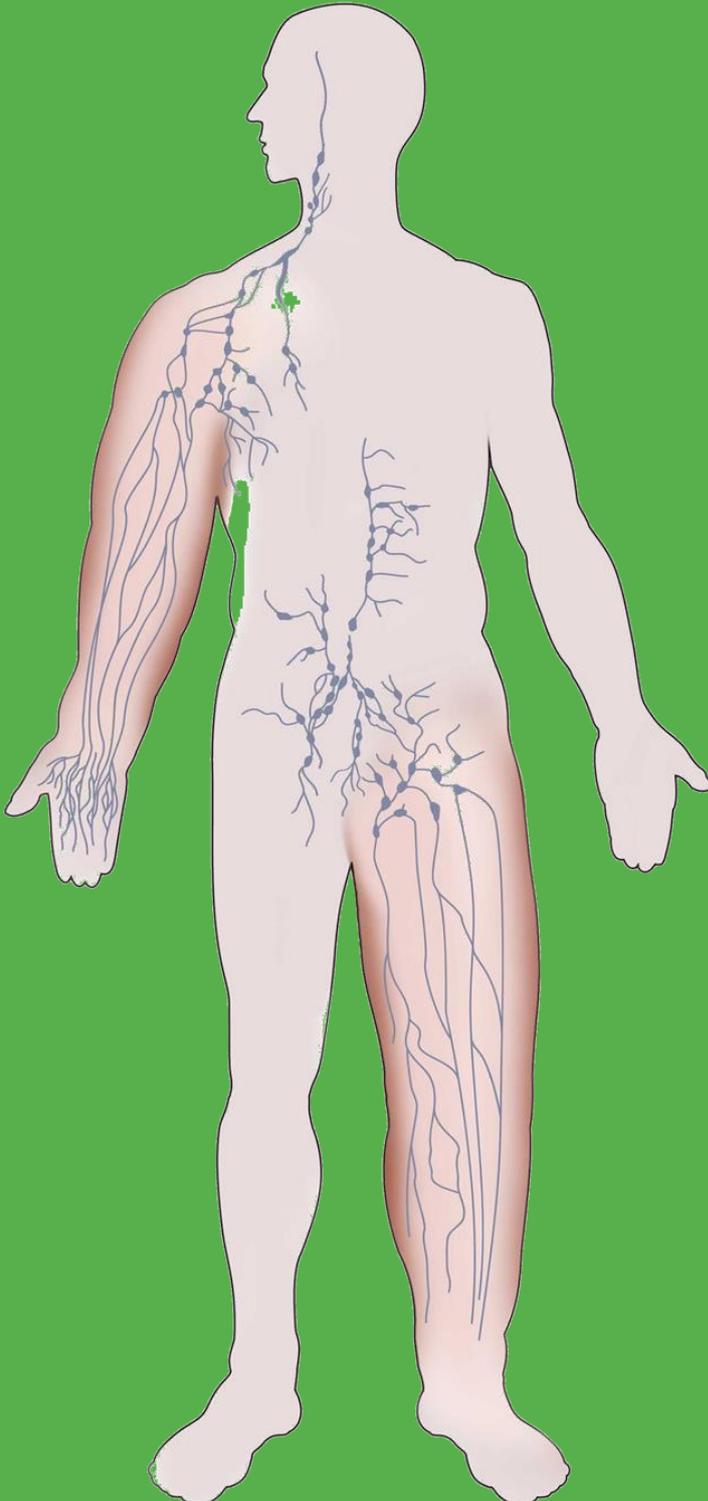




Lymphoedema Leaflet



**What is
Lymphoedema?**



**What causes
Lymphoedema?**



**What can I do to help
my lymphoedema?**



You have attended our Lymphoedema Clinic.

At the clinic you met the therapist who will be looking after you.



Therapists say that it is important to learn about your lymphoedema. This leaflet will help.

What is Lymphoedema?



Lymphoedema cannot be cured. This means you will always have it, it will never go away. But you can control it and stop it getting worse.

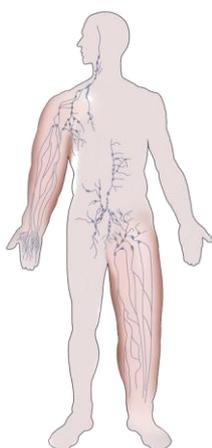


It can affect anyone at any age.



It causes swelling.

Swelling caused by Lymphoedema can happen in any part of the body. It normally happens in the arms or legs.



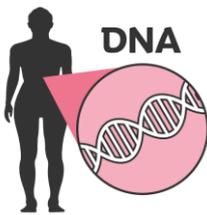
It happens when your lymphatic system does not work properly.

The lymphatic system is a map of very small tubes that move lymph fluid around your body. It also gets rid of lymph fluid your body does not need.

Lymphoedema is when the little tubes that carry the lymph fluid swell up. This makes it hard for the lymph fluid to move.

What causes Lymphoedema?

There are 2 types of Lymphoedema. They have different causes.



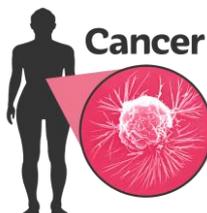
Type 1. Primary Lymphoedema

This is caused by changes in the genes that stop the lymphatic system from working properly.

Genes are very small patterns inside our body that carry the information called DNA that decides what your body will look like and how it will work.

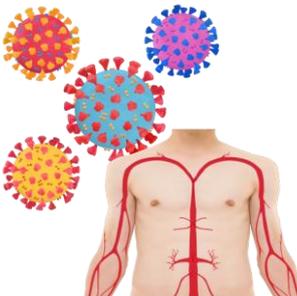
Type 2. Secondary Lymphoedema

This is caused by damage to the lymphatic system.



Damage can be caused by

- treatment for cancer
- infections
- red and swollen body tissue
- diseases that effect your blood moving through your veins
- being very overweight
- injury
- not being able to move round enough.



What can I do to help my Lymphoedema?

1

Wear your sleeve, stocking or wrap every day.



Most people with lymphoedema wear a tight sleeve, stocking or wrap every day.



They work by squeezing fluid out of swollen areas of your body. This is really important.



Your therapist will measure you for your sleeve, stocking or wrap. They make sure it fits you well.

Tell your therapist if it is not comfortable.



✓ Put on your sleeve, stocking or wrap first thing in the morning. Take it off before you go to bed at night.



✓ Every day wash your

- sleeve
- stocking
- soft sock that comes with your wrap.

Wraps do not need to be washed every day. Follow the instructions on the label.



✓ Ask for new stockings every 6 months.

✓ Ask for a new stocking if it is damaged.



✓ Check that your new stocking looks the same as your old stocking.

2

Take good care of your skin



- ✓ Wash and dry your skin every day. Do not forget to wash and dry between your toes and fingers. This is important.

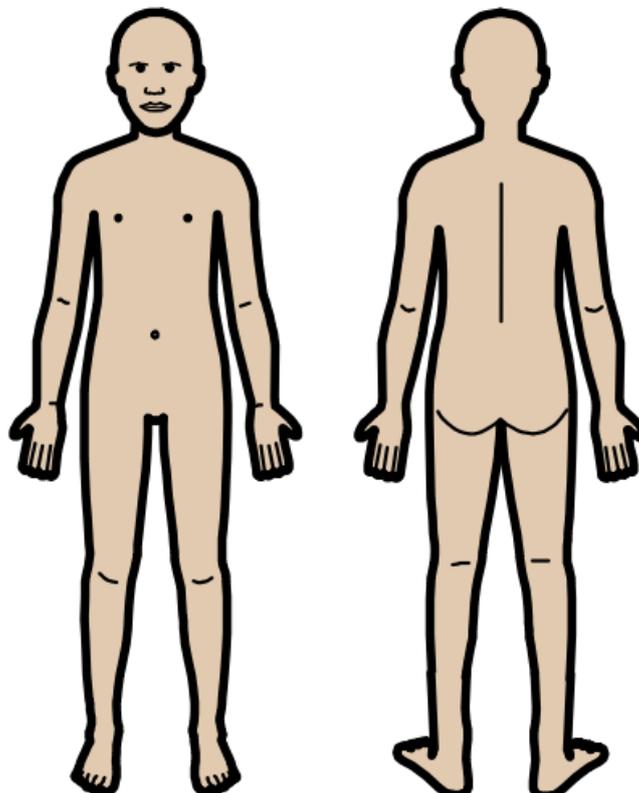


- ✓ Rub skin cream gently onto your skin every night before bed. This will help your skin and make infection less likely.



Your therapist will tell you what cream to use and how to put it on.

Your therapist will show you massage techniques. They will draw on the pictures below to show you where to massage.



3

Be active!



✓ Do not sit or stand in one position for too long.



✓ Help move fluid in your body.

- Paddle your feet up and down.
- Get up and walk around the room.
- Go up and down one step a few times.

4

Think about your weight



✓ Try to stay at a healthy weight. This is important.



✓ Try to lose weight if you are heavy.



✓ Eat healthy food.



✓ Exercise often. For example, go for a walk, swim or do some sport every day.

5

Keep your arm or leg lifted



✓ If your arms, legs or feet are swollen try to lift them up. Even a short amount of time will help.



✓ Sleep in a bed. Do not sleep in a chair or recliner.



Check your skin



Sometimes skin can get infected. It can become hot, red and sore. Sometimes it can feel as if you have the flu.



Contact your GP quickly and ask them to look at it.



If it is an infection you will need antibiotics. This is a type of medicine.



The GP can also help with another skin conditions. For example, Athlete's Foot. This can look like flaky skin between and under the toes. It can be red and sore too. A special cream will help this.

Top Tips



- ✓ Wear loose clothes and jewellery. Tight clothes and jewellery can pinch the body and cause fluid to build up.



- ✓ Wear comfortable shoes that do not rub or give you blisters.



- ✓ Wear gloves to stop getting cuts or burns. For example, gardening gloves and oven gloves.



- ✓ Wear long sleeves and trousers to protect your skin from insects that bite or sting.



- ✓ Use an antiseptic to clean cuts or insect bites. Antiseptics stop things that cause disease from growing.



- ✓ Drink lots of water if the weather is hot.



- ✓ Use an electric razor if you can. A good, clean normal razor is safe too.



- ✓ Use a nail file or clippers to cut your nails. Do not use scissors.



- ✓ Ask doctors and nurses to use your good arm if you are getting an injection or having your blood pressure taken.



- ✓ Wear something on your feet. Walking around in bare feet could lead to a cut.



- ✓ Protect your skin from the sun. Wear hats, long sleeves and trousers. Find some shade.



- ✓ Avoid things that make your skin go red because you are too hot or cold. For example, very hot or very cold water.

Where can I get more advice?

Your therapist



Your therapist is called

The clinic telephone number is

The Lymphoedema Network



**Lymphoedema Network
Northern Ireland**

Physiotherapy Department
Belfast City Hospital
Lisburn Road
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because lymphoedema matters



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