

Lymphedema Treatment

What is Lymphedema?

Lymphedema refers to chronic swelling of one, or both, arms or legs. It can also be present in the head, neck, and trunk. Treatment sessions are typically 1-1.5 hours. Treatment course depends on the severity of your lymphedema, which is determined by your lymphedema therapist. Lymphedema is treated through Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) which includes:

Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD)

Manual Lymphatic Drainage is a type of light “massage” designed to move the build-up of lymph fluid from a compromised area into an area where the lymphatic system is working normally

Bandaging/Compression Therapy

Bandaging involves creating a soft “cast” using special bandages on the affected extremity that provides compression to continue to push the fluid out of the extremity.

- The bandages must be worn 23 hours a day. You may take the bandages off for no more than 1 hour for showering/bathing. You must re-apply the bandages after 1 hour to prevent your swelling from worsening or returning.

- If your arm/hand is bandaged, you will need to wear short sleeves or loose fitting shirts/jackets to accommodate the bandages.

- If your leg/foot is bandaged, you will need to wear loose fitting pants. You will also require a shoe that is 1-2 sizes larger or that will stretch to accommodate for the increased size of the foot due to the layers of bandages. It is important that your foot is covered by proper foot wear to avoid foot injury, which can lead to infection. Infections can worsen your swelling.
 - Recommendations: Closed-toe lace up sneakers, slip on closed-toe shoes with rubber sole or non-slip bottom

- Once your swelling has decreased, you will require a compression garment that will help you to continue to manage your lymphedema.

Exercise

Exercise helps to improve flow of fluid through the lymphatic system, especially when performed while wearing your bandages

Skin Care

Keeping the skin clean and dry helps to prevent infections. Infections can worsen your swelling.