



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Welcome to the Lymphoedema Service

Information for patients and carers



This leaflet is about Lymphoedema & Lipoedema.

What is the lymphatic system?

The lymphatic system is part of the body's immune system. It helps keep us safe from illness and infection.

It is made up of tiny tubes called lymph vessels and small parts called lymph nodes. A clear fluid called lymph moves through these tubes and nodes.

The lymphatic system has three main jobs:

- It moves extra fluid from body tissues back into the blood.
- It helps clean the body by removing waste from cells.
- It carries special white blood cells (called lymphocytes) that fight germs.

Lymphoedema

Lymphoedema is a swelling caused by a build-up of lymph fluid within the tissue space of a part of the body. This occurs if the lymph nodes and lymph vessels that carry the lymph fluid away are not working properly.

It can be hereditary, or caused by trauma or treatments, and can affect any part of the body from head and neck to feet and toes.

Symptoms of lymphoedema

The swelling can cause discomfort, tightness, loss of function and mobility in the affected area, and dryness to the skin. There is also an increased risk of infection within the affected area. If left untreated, the condition is likely to worsen.

Treatments for lymphoedema

It is not possible to repair damage caused to the lymphatic system, but it can be eased, reduced and controlled to help you feel more comfortable. A Lymphoedema Specialist will work with you and provide comprehensive advice, treatment and support.

Lipoedema

Lipoedema is a condition where abnormal fat cells cause excess fatty tissue. It commonly affects the hips and legs but can affect arms as well. It mainly affects women and can be very painful.

Clinics

Our Lymphoedema clinics are situated in Sobell House Hospice Out-patients Department and Katharine House Hospice, and we treat both cancer and non cancer patients.

Some people have a combination of lipoedema and lymphoedema. There is no cure for either - they are long-term (chronic) conditions. However, with the right treatment symptoms can be improved and managed well.

Oxford Lymphoedema Service is led by a Specialist Physiotherapist and Specialist Nurses. We offer advice, treatments and education, and support patients to self-manage their condition.

Sobell House clinic

Monday to Thursday and evenings, for patients with cancer- and non-cancer-related lymphoedema, and patients with lipoedema.

Katharine House clinic

Monday to Thursday for patients with cancer- and non-cancer-related lymphoedema, and patients with lipoedema.



Lymphedema Services
Sobell House reception

After referral

Upon referral to our Lymphoedema Clinic one of our Specialists will assess you.

Your first appointment will last one to two hours. We will ask about your medical history and your symptoms, and how your condition affects you. We will examine you to assess the area of swelling.

We will devise a treatment plan that will involve one or a combination of treatments.

We will also talk to you about skin care, exercise/movements and any lifestyle changes that may help to manage your lymphoedema or lipoedema.

Following your first visit and assessment any further follow-up appointments will be about 45 minutes.

The number of appointments depends on your treatment, but we aim for you to continue self-management at home.

Advice and treatments

Skin care

Keep the area clean and well-moisturised: preventing the development of dry, cracked or broken skin reduces the risk of infection.

Movement

Movement is important to increase or maintain flexibility and to promote muscle pump action, which encourages lymph flow.

Our Specialist will be able to demonstrate Tripudio Flow and Pilates - gentle movements to aid lymphatic drainage.

Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD)

This is a specialised massage technique designed to improve lymph drainage, reducing congestion in swollen areas. We can teach Simple Lymph Drainage (SLD) techniques to patients to enable them to continue with treatment themselves at home.

Compression

The use of specialist compression garments such as stockings or sleeves helps to reduce swelling and then maintain this. We measure the affected limbs or areas of your body so that compression garments can be ordered specifically for you.

Compression bandaging is a treatment which may be offered in the clinic and consists of a three-week course of bandaging in conjunction with MLD or pneumatic pump treatment.

How to refer

Contact us

If you would like to be referred please discuss this with your GP or a health professional involved in your care.

Email: oxfordlymphoedemaclinic@ouh.nhs.uk

Tel: **01865 225864**

Feedback

Please tell us about your experience on our Clinic by scanning the QR code, following the link below or asking a member of the team for a paper survey.

Website:

www.ouh.nhs.uk/services/departments/palliative-care/services/#feedback

Please raise any concerns with staff at the time, and ask to speak to the Senior Lead Nurse who will be happy to listen and resolve any issues wherever possible.

If staff are unable to resolve your concerns please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Telephone: **01865 221 473**

Email: PALS@ouh.nhs.uk

Or scan QR code below:



Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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