



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Introduction to the Lymphoedema Clinic

Issued by the Lymphoedema Service



You have been referred to the Northumbria Lymphoedema Clinic. This leaflet explains what you can expect from the lymphoedema service in terms of treatment and care. This leaflet does not replace the lymphoedema information leaflets you will receive when you attend the clinic.

Lymphoedema is a chronic swelling of the arm, which can occur following breast cancer treatment. It can also present as tightness, pain and heaviness in the limb. You may have swelling in the upper body or breast.

What is the aim of the clinic?

- To establish if you have lymphoedema.
- To provide you with information, knowledge and strategies that will allow you to take control of your condition.
- To provide you with health promotion advice, this can influence lymphoedema.
- To empower you to achieve independence, and take control of your condition.

What can I expect from the lymphoedema clinic?

- You will see a practitioner who has been specifically trained to diagnose and treat lymphoedema.
- Your first appointment may be up to 1 hour, follow up appointments will be shorter.
- You will be given written and verbal information regarding the strategies used to treat lymphoedema.
- You will be given information about when you need to seek prompt medical attention.
- You will be given a telephone number for a member of the team.
- If required you may be referred to St Oswald's or Alnwick hospice for intensive therapy, bandaging and manual lymphatic drainage (massage).

What will happen when I attend the lymphoedema clinic?

Your first appointment will involve taking a medical history, and an examination of your upper body and limbs. We will also measure both your arms; this will allow us to establish if there is a difference in size between your limbs. Please wear a short sleeve garment or vest, this will make measuring your arms easier. After the assessment a personal treatment plan will be devised, discussed and agreed between yourself and the practitioner.

The treatment plan may include skin care, simple lymphatic drainage (massage), and exercises. It may be necessary for you to wear a compression sleeve. This is an elasticated sleeve which applies pressure to the limb to help reduce the swelling. You will be given a sleeve, but you may obtain a second and subsequent garments via a prescription from your GP.

If you do not follow the treatment plan you may be discharged. If your lymphoedema is mild and controlled for 2 years you will be considered for discharge.

What will happen if I do not attend the clinic and get treatment for the lymphoedema?

The symptoms may get worse. This may mean that your arm becomes larger, and heavier. You may develop pain and skin changes. If you have swelling in your upper body or breast the swelling may continue to get worse. If lymphoedema becomes complicated it takes more intensive therapies at St Oswalds or Alnwick hospice to treat it.

Contact numbers

Please bear in mind that we are often not immediately available to answer your questions. It may be necessary for you to leave a message – we will return your call.

Senior Physiotherapist
North Tyneside General Hospital
0191 293 4064

Specialist Nurse Practitioner
Wansbeck General Hospital
01670 529636

Senior Macmillan Breast Care Nurse
North Tyneside General Hospital
0191 293 4183

Women's Health Physiotherapist
Wansbeck General Hospital
01670 564010

Support Contact Numbers and Websites

Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN)

0207 351 0990 or website:

www.lymphoedema.org

British Lymphology Society (BLS)

01242 695077 or website:

www.thebls.com

Breast Cancer Care Helpline

0808 800 6000 or website:

www.breastcancercare.org

Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline

0845 601 6161 or website:

www.macmillan.org.uk

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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