



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Your guide to wearing compression garments

Issued by the lymphoedema / breast team

This leaflet is to give you information about wearing a compression garment. It will explain why you have been advised to wear the compression garment and offers general advice.

Wearing a compression garment is part of the treatment package for your lymphoedema which may also include skin care, exercises and simple lymph drainage massage.

Why do I need to wear a compression garment?

Wearing a compression garment prevents fluid building up in the limb and give firm support to the muscles.

To be effective the garment must:

- provide enough pressure
- provide most pressure at the lower part of the limb and less at the top of the limb so that fluid is pushed upwards
- be firm fitting and comfortable, correct measurement and fitting is essential

When should I put the compression garment on?

- You should put your compression garment on first thing in the morning and wear it all day. Take off the compression garment when you are going to bed. Avoid putting the compression garment on directly after a bath. This may harm your skin and you may find it a struggle to put your compression garment on.
- Do not put the compression garment on after applying your skin care as this makes your skin sticky. Use moisturizing lotions or cream at night to prevent your skin drying out.

General advice about wearing a compression garment

- When putting on the compression garment ensure that it is evenly distributed on the limb. Ensure you have no creases or wrinkles as this will act like an elastic band causing fluid to build up behind them.
- The compression garment should feel firm and supportive not painfully tight. It should not make the fingers/hand turn blue or dusky purple. If this happens remove the compression garment immediately.
- If you experience aching in the limb after a period of inactivity, it is best to move and exercise the limb rather than remove the compression garment. This is because the discomfort is usually due to the build up of fluid which will settle down once you are active.
- If the compression garment is too loose it will not do its job. If it is loose over the hand or foot, but fits the rest of the limb well you may need to put padding between the compression garments. Discuss this with your practitioner for more advice. If your compression garment is very loose you may need to be remeasured and refitted.
- Never roll the top of the compression garment over. If you do this it will act as an elastic band and cause fluid to build up in part of the limb. If the garment seems too long, ease the excess material evenly down the limb until the length seems correct.
- If the swelling extends into your hand/foot you will need a compression garment that offers support to this area.
- You will need to get new compression garments every 4-6 months as they lose their compression. Ask your practitioner how to go about getting new garments, most garments are available on prescription from your GP.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact your breast care nurse or physiotherapist:

Physiotherapist numbers:

North Tyneside General Hospital (0191) 293 4064

Wansbeck General Hospital (01670) 564010

Support contact numbers

Breast Care Nurse

North Tyneside General Hospital

(0191) 293 4183

Breast Care Nurse

Wansbeck General Hospital

(01670) 529319

Breast Care Nurse

Hexham General Hospital

(01434) 655386

Breast Practitioners

Wansbeck General Hospital

(01670) 529636

Useful information

Breast Cancer Care Helpline

0808 800 6000 or website: www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline

0845 601 6161 or website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Breast Care Campaign

www.breastcare.co.uk

British Lymphology Society (BLS)

www.thebls.com

Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN)

www.lymphoedema.org

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: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk



PIN 210/V4

Review date: January 2024

© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.