



Living with lymphoedema after breast cancer

Breast Cancer Care is here for anyone affected by breast cancer. We bring people together, provide information and support, and campaign for improved standards of care. We use our understanding of people's experience of breast cancer and our clinical expertise in everything we do. Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call our free helpline on **0808 800 6000**.

A large print version of this booklet can be downloaded from our website, www.breastcancercare.org.uk It is also available on audio CD or in Braille on request. Call **0845 092 0808** for more information.



personal experience professional support

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Introduction

If you have recently developed lymphoedema, or have an ongoing problem with lymphoedema, this booklet will give you a general overview of the condition, how it can affect your life and how it may be successfully managed.

For information about the risks of developing lymphoedema and for ideas on trying to prevent it, please see our factsheet **Reducing the risk of lymphoedema**.

What is lymphoedema?

Lymphoedema is swelling caused by a build-up of lymph fluid in the surface tissues of the body. It develops most commonly in the arms or legs although it can affect other areas of the body. Following breast cancer treatment this build-up may occur as a result of damage to the lymphatic system because of surgery and/or radiotherapy to the lymph nodes (glands) in the axilla (armpit) and surrounding area. Sometimes it can be due to cancer cells obstructing the lymph system.

One, some or all of the lymph nodes in the axilla are often removed during breast surgery to check whether any cancer cells are present. The lymph nodes and vessels that have been damaged or removed cannot be replaced so the lymphatic drainage routes are reduced/altered. This can cause lymph fluid to build up in the surrounding tissues. It is not fully understood why lymphoedema develops in some people and not others but it can develop following

infection or injury to the limb.

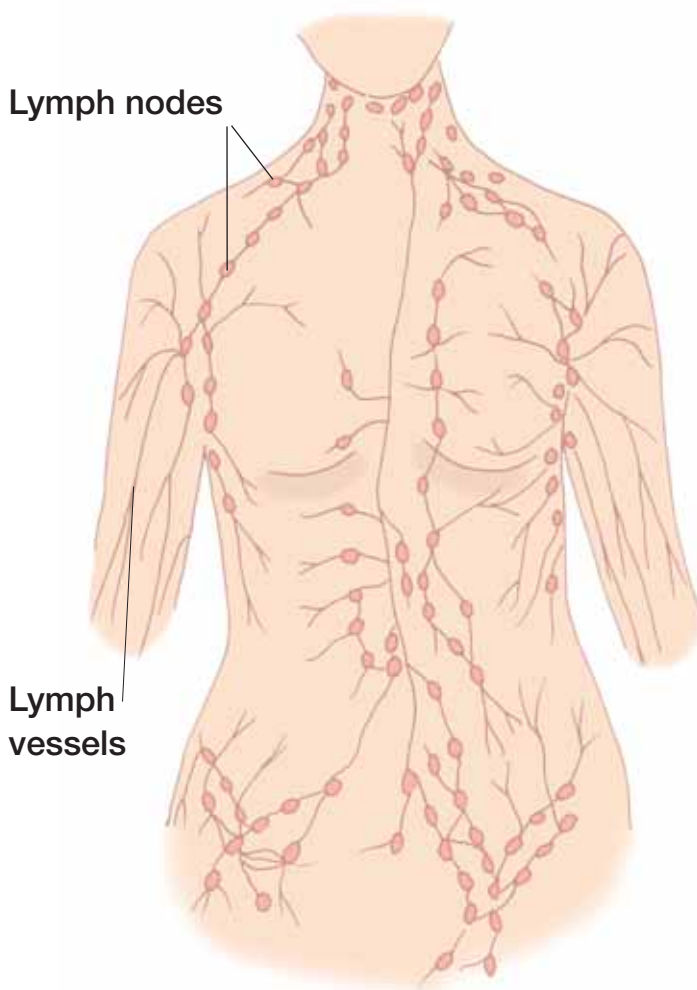
Lymphoedema may develop soon after surgery or radiotherapy, or it can occur many years later. It is important to remember that there is a lifetime risk of developing lymphoedema following breast cancer treatment where the lymph nodes have been removed or damaged.

Lymphoedema is a long-term condition, which means that once it has developed it can be controlled but is unlikely ever to go away completely. Treatment is aimed at encouraging other healthy parts of the lymph system to work more effectively and to prevent further problems or complications. The symptoms of lymphoedema usually respond very well to treatment and this means that in most cases it can be well controlled. Working with a lymphoedema specialist, people can do quite a lot for themselves to help manage and control the condition.

What is the lymphatic system?

The following brief description of the lymphatic system may help you to understand how lymphoedema can occur.

The lymphatic system is made up of a network of small vessels (similar to blood vessels), a deeper system



Lymph nodes

Lymph vessels

The lymphatic system

of lymph glands that extend throughout the body, and other lymphatic tissue such as the tonsils, liver and spleen. The lymphatic system works with the blood system to maintain and protect the balance of fluid in the surface tissues of the body by draining, filtering and transporting lymphatic fluid around the body.

The lymphatic vessels transport a straw coloured fluid called lymph which flows very slowly but continuously through the lymph vessels to the lymph nodes where it is filtered. Lymph is made up of water and protein and also contains white blood cells called lymphocytes, which help your body to fight infection. The lymph nodes help fight infection too by filtering out waste products like bacteria. They can also filter out cancer cells that have spread from a breast tumour, destroying some of them in the process.

What physical symptoms might I experience?

It is important to stress that lymphoedema symptoms can be very variable, and that many people who develop lymphoedema only have mild symptoms that can be well controlled. It is therefore very important to seek help as soon as swelling becomes noticeable.

Swelling

Swelling frequently develops in the arm immediately after breast surgery. This is part of the healing process and often settles within a short time without any treatment. If your arm is swollen for more than a few weeks after surgery and you become concerned about it, contact your breast care nurse. If arm swelling develops later on, perhaps a few months later or after your cancer treatment is completed, you should get advice from your breast care nurse or member of your specialist team as soon as possible so that they can refer you

to a specialist doctor if necessary. Always contact your doctor if you develop an infection, pain or ache in your affected arm because you may need antibiotic treatment or further advice. If lymphoedema is diagnosed, you may remain under the care of your breast care nurse or be referred to a specialist lymphoedema service.

Swelling can sometimes develop in the breast or chest wall following treatment for breast cancer. This can be uncomfortable and sometimes painful. If it lasts for more than a few weeks after your treatment has finished, or develops at a later stage, contact your breast care nurse or a member of your specialist team. A well-fitted bra with wide side straps and side pieces can help to support the breast and ease some of the discomfort. If your breast becomes red, inflamed and painful, contact your doctor as soon

as possible as you may have an infection and need some antibiotics.

Tightness

The arm can feel tight when there is extra fluid in the tissues. Some people feel tightness in the arm without the arm appearing swollen. Some also experience a 'cord-like' pulling sensation in the arm which often causes tenderness and difficulty extending the arm. Gentle exercise encourages lymph drainage and can help to relieve any feelings of tightness.

Dry skin

Stretched skin can become dry and flaky and sometimes feel itchy. It is important that dry skin is moisturised and kept healthy to stop infections developing. Moisturise your arm at the end of every day with an unperfumed moisturising cream, for example aqueous cream. This will help to

keep the skin supple and stop it becoming dry and cracked. Any cream is suitable as long as you are not sensitive to the product.

Arm stiffness

If your arm is swollen, it may limit movement in the joints. It is important to exercise your arm and shoulder regularly in order to reduce stiffness and encourage lymph drainage. If you were given specific exercises after your surgery or radiotherapy it is vital to continue doing them for as long as recommended (we produce a fold-out leaflet/poster called **Exercises after breast surgery** which features these exercises). It is also important to keep up your normal level of activity as much as possible, but avoid movements which strain your arm or mean it is in the same position for a period of time. See the section on *Exercise* for more detail.

Discomfort

Lymphoedema is not usually painful although some people may experience discomfort. Many people experience a tight, heavy feeling in the arm and the discomfort tends to be dull and vague. Discomfort often occurs after strenuous activity, so it is best to avoid this. Try resting the arm on pillows or cushions, doing some gentle exercise or taking painkillers. If this does not help, then speak to your breast care nurse, doctor or lymphoedema specialist who may be able to suggest other approaches. Any sharp or sudden pain should be investigated to find out the cause.

Infection

If your arm suddenly becomes painful with redness, increased swelling or a rash, you may have

developed an infection. This is called cellulitis. Flu-like symptoms are often the first sign and your arm may also become hot to the touch. These symptoms need attention from your doctor as you will probably need to start taking antibiotics straightaway.

If you have repeated infections you may be prescribed a low-dose antibiotic to take continuously. If you are travelling away from home, particularly if you are going abroad, it may be useful to take a supply of antibiotics with you in case you develop an infection while you are away. You may want to talk this through with your GP who will need to prescribe the antibiotics.

The Lymphoedema Support Network has a factsheet and information on cellulitis – see *Useful addresses* at the back of this booklet.

Where can I go for treatment?

In many cases the breast care nurse at your hospital will be able to help and advise you about mild lymphoedema. If you have swelling for some time or it is associated with other symptoms, you may need to be referred to a specialist lymphoedema service for advice and treatment.

If you would like to find out where your nearest clinic is, ask your breast care nurse or telephone our helpline on **0808 800 6000** (for typetalk prefix **18001**). We have a directory of clinics throughout the country and can give you details on how to contact them. The lymphoedema organisations listed at the end of the booklet will also be able to help.

What treatments are available?

Most people with lymphoedema have mild to moderate symptoms. However, for some people the lymphoedema can be more severe. Your breast care nurse or lymphoedema specialist will assess your swelling and discuss the best way to manage your symptoms.

The aim of treatment for lymphoedema is to encourage lymph fluid to move away from the tissues by making the lymph vessels work harder. The way this is done will vary depending on how severe your lymphoedema is but your treatment will include some, or all, of the following approaches at different times. You can do quite a lot of these things yourself alongside any professional treatment you are having.

- Skin care
- Exercise
- Compression garments
- Compression bandages
- Manual lymphatic drainage

- Simple lymphatic drainage

Skin care

Skin care is important because lymph fluid in the arm, together with a decrease in infection-fighting lymph nodes, means infections are more likely. Small breaks in the skin or some skin conditions which cause the skin to become red and sore can become a site for infection. Dry, flaky or cracked skin can also lead to infection.

If an infection develops it can lead to further damage in the lymph channels through scarring and eventually make the lymphoedema worse.

Here are some ways to keep your skin in the best possible condition.

- Wash your skin with warm water every day. Hot water will increase the blood supply to the area so should be avoided as it may make the swelling worse. If your fingers

are swollen, carefully wash and dry between them to stop fungal infections which can develop in warm, moist areas.

- Moisturise your arm at the end of every day with an unperfumed moisturising cream, for example aqueous cream. This will help to keep the skin supple and stop it becoming dry and cracked.
- Using gentle strokes apply the cream in the most comfortable way for you. Always finish with the last stroke in the direction of the hair, ensuring that the hairs are laid down.
- Treat any cuts, scratches or insect bites on the swollen area promptly by cleaning with warm water and applying an antiseptic cream to reduce the risk of infection. If it is a deep cut, use a dry dressing or plaster as well. If you notice a rash or redness on your arm, with or without pain, or an insect bite that does not heal, contact your doctor as soon as possible. You may need a course of antibiotics.

Try to avoid situations/things that could lead to you developing an infection by:

- wearing gloves when gardening or taking hot dishes out of the oven to prevent damage to the skin
- using insect repellent to avoid bites or stings
- avoiding scratches or bites from pets or other animals
- avoiding blood samples from or injections into your affected arm – if both your arms are affected, blood samples may be taken from your legs or feet. If you have acupuncture ask your therapist to avoid the affected areas
- taking extra care if removing underarm hair (or hair on your arm) – an electric razor or depilatory cream are safest as they are less likely to damage the skin
- taking care when cutting your nails and avoiding pushing cuticles back too harshly
- taking care when using sewing needles, tools or scissors.

Extreme changes in temperature can cause increased swelling. Try to avoid this by:

- not spending much time in very hot baths, steam rooms and saunas where the body gets very hot then cools quickly
- protecting skin from the risk of burns including sunburn - high factor sunscreen is advisable
- not spending too long in direct contact with ice or snow.

Lymph drainage can be affected if there is any tightness around the swollen arm. Try to avoid:

- tight or narrow bra straps, and tight sleeves, watches or rings – these can stop the lymph fluid flowing away from the swollen area
- having blood pressure readings taken on the swollen arm whenever possible (you can request a blood pressure reading be taken from your leg if both arms are affected).

Exercise

Exercise will keep your joints supple and is very important for lymph drainage. Although you may already use your arm actively in your everyday life or work and get plenty of exercise in this way, swelling can sometimes restrict movement of the arm and extra exercises may be helpful.

Any exercise you take should be done in a gentle and controlled way. If you are in any doubt, ask your lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse for advice. Starting exercise suddenly or too quickly can cause increased blood flow and make swelling worse. If you have any pain or discomfort in your arm or shoulder with any movement or exercise tell your specialist or breast care nurse.

Sport and fitness

Sports and activities that you did before you developed lymphoedema should still be possible as long as you return to them slowly and stop if you have any discomfort or you notice further swelling. If you have been fitted with a lymphoedema sleeve (see section on *Compression garments*), always wear it when you are exercising or when you are very active as exercise/activity encourages lymph drainage.

Swimming is a good activity as the water supports the swollen arm and makes movement easier. It also acts as a resistance against the tissue, encouraging fluid drainage. Try to use a variety of strokes to avoid repetition and work your muscles gently. If you prefer not to swim, water aerobics can help.

If you want to increase your activity levels or take up a new sport, make sure you do it gradually as some sports may be harmful. If you use gym equipment, talk to an instructor and avoid using equipment such as the rowing machine, cross trainer or heavy weights which make you use your arm in long repetitive movements. Gradual increase in activity is recommended.

General activities

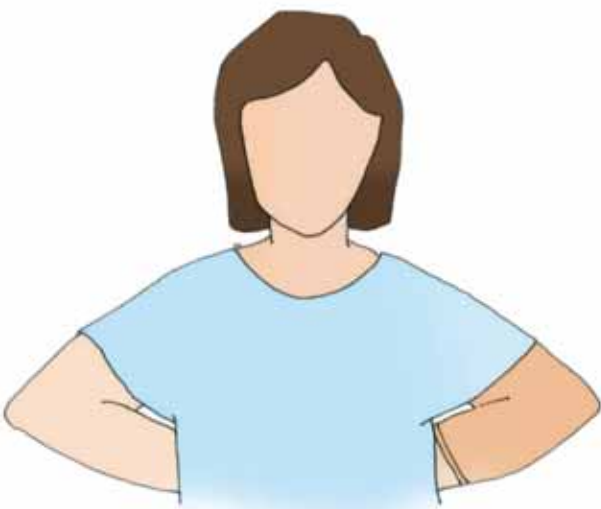
Try not to use the arm for lengthy, strenuous activities such as lifting, carrying heavy shopping, or pushing heavy equipment like lawn mowers and full shopping trolleys. Try to do other things in between to break up the length of time spent on them.

Shoulder exercises

It is important to keep your shoulder moving to avoid stiffness developing. You can do the following movements every day to encourage full shoulder movement and improve lymph drainage. If you have been fitted with a compression sleeve it is advisable to wear it when exercising as this will help the muscles to improve lymph drainage. When you first start these exercises do each one a couple of times and gradually work up to doing each exercise 10 times every day. If you find you can't do a movement fully or the exercises cause you pain, it is best to stop and get advice from your lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse.



Gently stretch your arm up straight as if reaching for something from a high cupboard. Do this gently, taking care not to overstretch the arm.



Gently move your hands behind your back between the shoulder blades.



Gently move your hand to the back of your head.

Hand and arm exercises

You can exercise your arm a little when you are walking around by opening and closing your fist. Try to avoid letting your arm hang down for long periods as this can encourage the lymph fluid to collect.

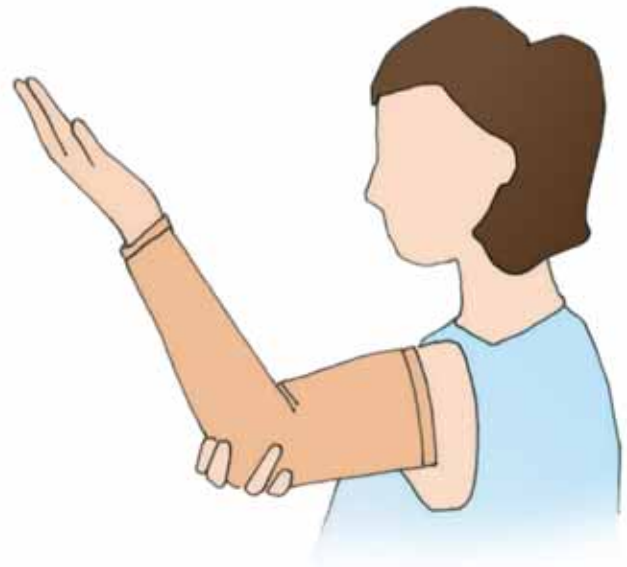
The following exercises are intended as a guide and can encourage lymph drainage in your arm. Your breast care nurse or lymphoedema specialist should be consulted for any specific advice on exercises and you should always stop if you find the exercises cause pain.

Take gentle and deep breaths before starting the exercises.



While sitting, rest your arm on the side of a chair or on a table. Slowly make a fist and then stretch your fingers out as wide as possible. Repeat 10 times.

Keep your arm in the same position. Slowly bend your hand from the wrist so that your fingertips point upwards. Then slowly drop your hand downward with your fingers pointing to the floor. Repeat 10 times.



Hold your arm straight out in front of you with the palm of your hand facing the ceiling. (This exercise may be easier standing up.) Slowly bend your elbow as far as possible and then straighten your arm again. You may need to support your arm with your other arm if it is heavy. Repeat to a maximum of 20 times and then rest.

Compression garments

You may be fitted with a compression garment in the form of a sleeve or glove to help control your lymphoedema. Compression garments are designed to prevent further swelling by encouraging lymph fluid to drain away from the affected arm. The garment provides a firm resistance against which the lymph vessels are squeezed by the muscles during activity. This allows the lymph fluid to move up the arm more effectively.

Unless your specialist suggests otherwise, the garment is worn all day and taken off at night. Wearing the garment may feel quite strange at first but it should not cause pain or discomfort and once on, it will feel comfortable and supportive. You will normally be provided with two garments so that one can be washed while the other is being worn. Regular washing according to the care instructions will prolong the life of the garment but you will need replacement garments every four to

six months to ensure that the compression remains correct for the amount of swelling you have.

Apply your garment carefully. You may find that rubber gloves are helpful for easing it on but if you have great difficulty putting it on or taking it off, speak to your lymphoedema specialist about using an applicator. It can help to hold onto a fixed support, such as a towel rail. This gives some resistance against which you can pull your garment up evenly. You may find it helpful to put your garment on by turning it two-thirds inside out to start with and pulling the first third on. Then pull the rest of the garment up a little at a time. This will make sure that the garment is applied evenly and ensure you get the correct compression.

It is important that the garment does not have any wrinkles and that the fabric is even so that it fits well. Never turn the top of the garment over if it seems too long as this will put too much pressure in one area.

You may need a shorter garment instead – again talk to your lymphoedema specialist.

Put your garment on in the morning when you get up as this is when there should be less swelling. If it feels too much to wear the garment all day, start by just wearing it for a few hours each day, gradually increasing the time so that you are eventually wearing it all day. If you find the garment difficult to cope with, and your lymphoedema specialist has checked that it is the correct size, try wearing it when you are at your most active – for example, when you are doing sports, gardening, housework or physical work – and then take it off when you are least active. The compression garment is most useful when your muscles are working actively and least useful during rest. However, always wear your garment when flying as the change in pressure can affect your swelling. The garment should be worn for the duration of the flight and for a few hours after.

You need to be aware of certain circumstances and should contact your lymphoedema specialist if they arise.

- If your weight changes, you may notice that your garment becomes too tight or too loose. If you have concerns about the fit of your garment, always contact your lymphoedema specialist because you may need to be measured for a new one.
- If you find it painful to wear your garment, or you notice a change in sensation such as numbness or tingling in your arm or possibly a change in colour at the tips of your fingers, take it off and contact your lymphoedema specialist immediately, as the garment may be too tight.

- Sometimes the tough material of the garment can make your skin sore, particularly in the elbow crease or over bony areas on your hand.
- If you notice that swelling appears in areas not covered by the garment such as the fingers or hand, you may need a different garment.
- If you develop an infection in your arm, your garment may be painful to wear. It is best to take off the garment until the infection has settled down and start wearing it again once your arm feels less painful. If your skin has become sore as a result of the infection, wait until it has improved because the garment may damage the skin further.
- After wearing a compression garment for six months, the fit and comfort will need to be reassessed and you should contact your lymphoedema specialist.

Compression bandages

Compression bandages are used when the swelling has made the limb a difficult size or shape for compression garments to be fitted. They are also used if the skin has become damaged and sore as using compression garments may cause further damage.

Several layers of bandages are put on the arm by a lymphoedema specialist or another healthcare professional who has received appropriate training to do this. Initially these can make the arm seem bigger than normal and they may feel bulky and cumbersome. The bandages may be removed and reapplied daily (depending on the severity). Over two to three weeks of daily bandaging the arm shape and size will change so that compression garments can be fitted to control the swelling that remains.

Your lymphoedema specialist will discuss the aims of compression bandaging with you if it is felt you would benefit from this type of

treatment. You will need to wear clothes that will accommodate the extra bulk of the bandages and be able to attend the clinic each day to have the bandages changed. It is important to move your arm around as much as possible while the bandages are in place, as this will improve the effectiveness of the bandages.

Manual lymphatic drainage (MLD)

MLD is a specialised type of massage carried out by a trained therapist. It can be used for any degree of swelling caused by lymphoedema but it is usually used when the swelling is severe or difficult to manage. MLD can be particularly useful over areas where compression garments cannot easily be worn, such as the breast area.

The MLD therapist uses specialised hand movements to stimulate

lymph drainage and move lymph fluid away from areas where it has collected. It is a slow, rhythmical treatment that takes time to complete and must be carried out by a trained practitioner. MLD is not normally used as a treatment for lymphoedema on its own and is usually combined with other treatments to achieve a better result.

Your lymphoedema specialist will be able to tell you if MLD could help you. There are only a few trained MLD therapists in the UK so this type of massage is not widely available. Most of the trained therapists work independently. To find out if there is a therapist in your area talk to your lymphoedema specialist or contact The Lymphoedema Support Network or MLD UK (see the list of *Useful addresses* at the back of this booklet).

Simple lymphatic drainage (SLD)

Your lymphoedema specialist may teach you a simple type of massage based on the principles of MLD which aims to improve lymph drainage in areas of the body near the swelling. If you find it difficult to do the massage yourself, someone close to you can be taught how to help you with it.

If you have been taught SLD it should be carried out daily to stimulate the lymphatic system regularly. You need to do SLD carefully and not change the sequence of the movements because this will affect how well it works. The massage technique is best done without using oils or cream on the skin so that good contact is kept between the hand and the skin. The Lymphoedema Support Network has a self-help video which demonstrates SLD. See *Useful addresses* at the back of the booklet.

Other treatments for lymphoedema

Compression pumps

Mechanical compression pumps squeeze the swollen arm in a plastic sleeve that inflates and deflates at regular intervals. The pumps are very occasionally used in the management of lymphoedema with other treatments, but should never be used without the advice of your lymphoedema therapist. They must always be used under close supervision.

Liposuction

This is a surgical procedure in which fat is removed from the affected area. It is not widely acknowledged as a part of the treatment for lymphoedema in the UK and is only considered for the most severe cases. It should not be considered before other therapies such as exercise, compression bandaging and MLD have been tried. The aim is to improve movement and reduce

pain and discomfort. Women who have this procedure are still advised to wear a compression sleeve and often this needs to be worn 24 hours a day to maintain the loss of volume from the arm. It's important to talk to your specialist if you are considering this type of treatment.

Kinesiotaping

Kinesiotape is a relatively new type of treatment for lymphoedema. A trained therapist applies a special type of adhesive tape to the skin of both the unaffected and the swollen area of the body. The tape lifts the skin during movement and

encourages lymph fluid to move towards the uncongested areas and the lymph nodes. Kinesiotape is usually used with other forms of treatment. However, it is sometimes used in isolation to manage lymphoedema if it develops in areas such as the breast and chest wall. It can also be used to soften and reduce fibrosis (hard, firm tissue).

As this is a new treatment there are not many people yet who have been trained in using this technique. Further studies are needed with people who have lymphoedema to look at the benefit of using this type of treatment.

Maintaining a healthy weight

Being overweight can affect how you respond to treatment for lymphoedema so it is important to try to keep your weight within normal limits. There is no special diet that will help but if you are overweight, try to follow a healthy,

well balanced eating plan. If you are concerned about your weight, your lymphoedema specialist or doctor may be able to advise you on how to get started, or they may refer you to a dietitian.

What changes should I look out for?

Managing lymphoedema successfully needs regular, ongoing treatment and advice from your lymphoedema specialist. If you are concerned about your arm or chest area and/or breast at any time, you should contact your lymphoedema specialist or breast cancer nurse, but particularly if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- painful arm, chest and/or breast with redness, or a rash, hot to the touch and which may be accompanied by flu-like symptoms (see section on *Infection*, page 6)
- painful arm, chest and/or breast with possible increased swelling or other signs of problems with circulation, such as a change in colour or enlarged and visible veins
- increased swelling of the whole arm or isolated areas such as the fingers, chest or breast
- changes in feeling or ability to move your affected arm, hand or fingers.

Will I need to change my lifestyle?

Lymphoedema can disrupt your life in a number of ways. You may find that it affects you on an emotional level as well as on a physical one.

An understanding of the condition and why it has developed may help you adjust to any changes that might be necessary. For a few people the swelling will restrict movement and this can make jobs and activities difficult. There are a number of special aids available, for example, equipment to help with activities such as dressing, washing or eating. If you think you need extra help, ask your doctor to refer you to an occupational therapist who will be able to assess your needs.

There is no reason why having lymphoedema should stop you enjoying holidays, but some extra preparation may be necessary.

- Decide what you need to take on holiday in advance and start your packing early so that you do not overexert your swollen arm in the few days before you leave.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing when travelling to ensure that bands and belts are not too tight.
- Use a suitcase on wheels rather than one you carry and ask for help when moving luggage around. Keep your hand baggage light and try to carry it on your back rather than your shoulder.
- Try not to sit for too long in one position; take regular breaks if travelling by car or move around if you are travelling by air. Gentle exercises can also be carried out while sitting to promote lymph flow.
- If you have been fitted with a compression garment, always remember to wear it during your journey.

- A good sunscreen is essential to prevent sunburn if you are going somewhere hot. Loose cotton clothes with long sleeves will also protect your swollen arm from the sun.
- Remember to take a mosquito repellent and use it every day, particularly in the evening and at night. Mosquito bites can become infected and are very uncomfortable.
- It is a good idea to take antibiotics with you so that you can start taking them immediately if you develop an infection in your swollen arm.
- Try to avoid extremes of temperature; getting too hot then too cold, or too cold then too hot.

Coming to terms with lymphoedema

On an emotional level, you may feel that lymphoedema is harder to come to terms with than the cancer treatment itself. You may experience a mixture of feelings depending upon the degree of swelling and how it affects your daily life but it is normal to feel angry, resentful or fed up at times. You might manage these feelings better by trying to understand why they have developed and taking positive steps such as relaxation to help you cope with them.

If there are times when you feel that you are not coping very well, don't be afraid to ask for help, either from your lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse. You may find it helpful to talk to other people who are also living with the condition. We can put you in touch with a trained volunteer who has lymphoedema so that you can share experiences and get practical and emotional support. For further

information contact Breast Cancer Care's helpline on **0808 800 6000** (for Typetalk prefix **18001**). The discussion forum on the Breast Cancer Care website has a specific section for people affected by lymphoedema where you can chat to other people with lymphoedema and share tips.

Some people feel that lymphoedema affects their self-confidence because favourite hobbies or activities have to be reconsidered. Talk to your lymphoedema specialist about how you can modify your activities rather than stop them altogether.

Having lymphoedema can have an impact on your body image and self-esteem. This may affect you in a number of ways including how you feel about intimacy and sex. You may find our booklet **Sexuality, intimacy and breast cancer** helpful.

Sometimes the swelling cannot be hidden away easily (particularly during the summer months) and may therefore be a constant reminder of your breast cancer diagnosis. You may find that some people close to you cannot appreciate that a symptom like swelling can cause so much distress. It may be helpful for those around you to read this booklet to get a better understanding of what you are going through.

Managing your lymphoedema may mean that you need to make some adjustments to your lifestyle, but with appropriate treatment the symptoms can be reduced, helping to minimise the effect on your daily life.

Beyond this booklet

Further support from Breast Cancer Care

Free telephone helpline
0808 800 6000
(Typetalk prefix 18001)

Our helpline provides information and support for anyone affected by breast cancer. Everyone on our helpline either has personal experience of breast cancer or is a breast care nurse. The team comes from a variety of backgrounds, so callers get to talk to someone who understands the issues they're facing.

The team is able to talk about clinical, medical and emotional issues surrounding breast cancer and breast health. Everyone on the helpline has an excellent knowledge of breast cancer issues and receives regular information on new developments. They can talk through the complexities of different treatments to help you understand your options and explain the best way for you to get treatment.

Volunteer support

Many people who have breast cancer find it helpful to talk to someone who has been in a similar situation. Breast Cancer Care's Peer support service puts you in touch with someone who has personal experience of breast cancer and has been trained to listen and offer emotional support. You can talk to someone at any stage – whenever you feel it would help. Call our helpline or visit our website for more information about this free service. You can also contact our centres to access services (contact details on the inside back cover of this booklet).

Telephone support groups

At Breast Cancer Care we offer free and confidential telephone support groups for people with breast cancer. They are facilitated by a professional therapist and a specialist nurse and are individually tailored to cover different aspects of breast cancer. They aim to give you

the opportunity to express your feelings and share your experiences with others who may have been in a similar situation. For more information, call our helpline, visit the website or contact your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre (contact details on the inside back cover of this booklet).

Courses and activities

We run courses and activities for people with breast cancer, which aim to provide information and support and give people the chance to meet others in a similar situation. For more information about these events, contact your nearest Breast Cancer Care centre or call our helpline.

Online forums and Live chat

The Breast Cancer Care website hosts discussion forums covering all aspects of the disease and its treatment. This service is available 24 hours a day and allows you to talk to people in a similar situation

to you and to share your thoughts and feelings.

All forum users post their messages and responses at any time, however the regular Live chat sessions take place among users who are all logged on at the same time. They are hosted by Breast Cancer Care staff or a clinical specialist and give you the opportunity to discuss anything related to your diagnosis. Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk for more details.

Ask the nurse

This is another service on the Breast Cancer Care website. You can email a question on any breast cancer or breast health issue and our team of nurses will reply promptly. The service is strictly confidential.

Publications

Breast Cancer Care produces a wide range of publications providing information for anyone affected by breast cancer. All of our

publications are regularly reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer. You can order our publications by using our order form, which can be requested from our helpline. All our publications can also be downloaded from our website.

Useful addresses

Lymphoedema organisations

British Lymphology Society (BLS)

9-11 Oldbury Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL51 0HH

Telephone: 01242 695077

Fax: 01242 695125

Email: info@thebls.com

Website: www.thebls.com

The British Lymphology Society (BLS) is a multi-disciplinary group of healthcare professionals and other interested parties directly involved in the management of lymphoedema or interested in furthering the work of the Society. The main objectives of BLS are to promote awareness of lymphoedema and to establish standards of treatment and long-term management of the condition. Its website includes a directory of lymphoedema clinics around the country.

The Lymphoedema Support Network

St Luke's Crypt
Sydney Street
London SW3 6NH

Telephone: 020 7351 4480
(Information and support)

Telephone: 020 7351 0990
(Administration)

Fax: 020 7349 9809

Email:
adminlsn@lymphoedema.freemove.
co.uk

Website:
www.lymphoedema.org/lsn

The Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN) is a national patient-led charity which provides information and support to people with lymphoedema. It runs a telephone helpline, produces a quarterly newsletter, self-help videos and a wide range of fact sheets, and maintains an up-to-date website. It works to raise awareness of lymphoedema and campaigns for better national standards of care.

MLD UK

PO Box 14491
Glenrothes
Fife KY6 3YE

Telephone/Fax: 0844 800 1988

Email: admin@mlduk.org.uk

Website: www.mlduk.org.uk

Send a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a list of MLD practitioners.

Cancer organisations

Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ

Telephone: 020 7840 7840

Macmillan CancerLine:

0808 808 2020

Cancerbackup Helpline:

0808 800 1234

Textphone: 0808 808 0121

Email: cancerline@macmillan.org.uk

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support improves the lives of people affected by cancer by providing practical, medical, emotional and financial support, and campaigning for better cancer care. Its Cancerbackup Helpline team can provide up-to-date information on diagnosis, symptoms, treatments, clinical trials and more.

The Macmillan CancerLine provides information and emotional support.

Other services include cancer information booklets, Macmillan nurses and a website.

Would you like more information?

To find out more about Breast Cancer Care and the free services we offer, please fill in your details below and return this slip to:

**Breast Cancer Care, FREEPOST RRKZ-ARZY-YCKG,
5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS**

Your details

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

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I am a (please tick)

person who has/who has had breast cancer

friend/relative of someone with breast cancer

healthcare professional

other (please state) _____

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From time to time we may wish to send you further information on our services and activities.

Please tick here if you don't want to hear from us.

free helpline 0808 800 6000
www.breastcancercare.org.uk

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Registered charity in Scotland SC038104

Registered company in England 2447182

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This booklet has been produced by Breast Cancer Care's clinical specialists and reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer.

Breast Cancer Care is committed to equal opportunities and access for all.

Design: SMD Design

For all breast cancer or breast health concerns call our free, national helpline on **0808 800 6000** (for Tynetalk prefix **18001**) or visit **www.breastcancercare.org.uk**

Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Breast Cancer Care.

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