

Multi-layered bandaging

You have been offered a course of multi-layered bandaging as a treatment for your swollen limb. The bandaging process requires commitment from you as the patient as well as the staff. This factsheet provides information on some things that you can do to help us achieve the best possible results from your treatment.

The treatment usually involves visiting the hospital daily, Monday to Friday, for 2–3 weeks. The first appointment will take about one hour and the following visits around 30–45 minutes.

Bandaging involves various layers of protection, padding and compression bandages being applied to try to reduce the size of the limb, and sometimes to improve its shape. We do not recommend that you drive whilst your limb is in bandages. It will be more bulky than usual, making it harder for you to react quickly and therefore your safety while driving cannot be guaranteed. If you do decide to drive during treatment, you must check with your insurance company as it could affect your car insurance.

What to bring with you

- Please ensure you have clothing large or loose enough to wear over the bulky bandages, including a coat, if necessary
- If you are having your leg bandaged, you will need to bring a large lace-up shoe two or three sizes bigger than usual, which is safe to walk in
- Please also bring your own toiletries and towel to wash and dry your limb when the bandages are removed, and your usual moisturiser to use afterwards.

How much will I be able to do?

You may need to adapt some activities involving work, housework or hobbies during your course of bandaging treatment due to the bulk of the bandages. You may need to discuss this with your lymphoedema therapist. The following pictures are examples of activities which you should be able to manage whilst in bandages.

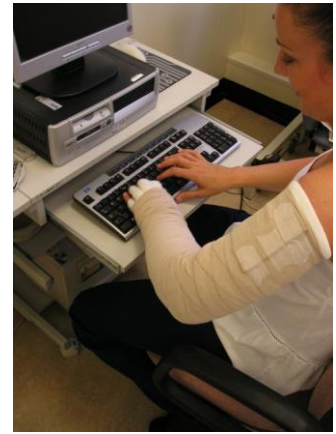


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It is important to exercise the bandaged limb to achieve the best results from the treatment. If your leg is being treated, then it may be helpful to walk all or part of the way to the hospital for your appointment. Try to take regular walks during the day within your own limitations. A short brisk walk is better than a stroll.

If the weather is bad, then make the effort to walk around at home (up and down the stairs is good). It is important to walk as normally and as safely as possible. Resting is also important but remember to put your legs up in a well-supported position, level with your bottom, to assist lymph drainage.

If your arm is bandaged, try to use it as much as possible for everyday activities. You may need to use a plastic glove to perform any wet or dirty tasks, such as washing up. We may give you a separate factsheet showing some simple range of movement exercises, which you can try whilst sitting down. The best position in which to rest your arm is supported on the arm of a chair, with cushions or a pillow. Remember, a bandaged limb is heavy to carry around and you will need to rest as well as exercise.

When you bathe or shower, you will need to cover the bandages to keep them dry. You can use cling film, a fresh plastic bin bag or purchase a special waterproof limb covering from a chemist or online.

What do I do if the bandages cause new problems?

Your bandages will feel strange at the start of your treatment, but you should soon become used to them. They should not cause any pain, numbness, tingling or colour changes.

If you notice any change in the colour or sensation of your fingers or toes:

- First try some gentle exercise to move them
- If this does not help, remove the top layer of bandages and move your limb
- If the symptoms persist, then remove all the bandages and put on your compression garment until your next appointment.

What happens at weekends?

We do not provide a Lymphoedema Service at the weekends, so your bandages will remain in place from Friday to Monday. If they become too loose, put on your compression sleeve or stocking instead and wear this overnight as well as in the day. This will maintain the reduction achieved by the bandages.



How will my progress and treatment be monitored?

Your lymphoedema therapist will always review your limb before re-applying the bandages. During your appointment, it is very important to report any problems or difficulties you may be experiencing with the bandaging. There may be more than one therapist providing your care and they will all be working within the same principles, but there may be some small differences in the way the bandages are applied. Do not hesitate to say if someone has done something different to make it either more or less comfortable.

Both your limbs will be measured at the start of treatment and then again at the end of each week, in order to monitor progress. We recommend that you complete the course, but you are free to stop treatment at any time for any reason. Occasionally, your lymphoedema therapist may recommend treatment is stopped before the planned end date. They will discuss this with you if this is the case.

What happens after this course of treatment?

At the end of your course of treatment, you will be fitted with new compression garments. In order to maintain any reduction in the size of your limb, **we advise that you wear your garments during the night as well as in the day for the first six weeks after treatment**, as long as they are comfortable.

After the six weeks, nightly wear can gradually be reduced. We may discuss with you the use of an adjustable Velcro wrap to wear over your compression garment. It is also important to continue your daily skincare, exercise and simple lymphatic drainage techniques. We will arrange a follow up appointment for one month after your treatment and we will continue to monitor your swollen limb.

Contact details

Please contact the clinic if you have any concerns.

Lymphoedema Clinic

Chelsea 020 7808 2981

Sutton 020 8661 3504

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

