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## Multilayered bandaging for Lymphoedema

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You have been offered a course of multilayer bandaging as a treatment for your swollen limb. This usually involves visiting the hospital every day – your lymphoedema therapist will discuss with you. 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. This factsheet provides information on some things that you can do to ensure that you achieve the best possible results from your treatment.

Treatment usually lasts for two to three weeks and does not include weekends. The first appointment will take about one hour and the following visits around 30 to 45 minutes.

We do not recommend that you drive yourself to, or from, the hospital while your limb is in bandages. Your limb will be more bulky than usual, making it harder for you to react quickly and therefore your safety while driving cannot be guaranteed. We advise a relative or friend drives you to your appointments whilst your limb is in bandages. If you do decide to drive during treatment, you must check with your car insurance company as it could affect your insurance.

### **What to bring with you**

Please ensure you bring clothing large or loose enough to wear over the bandaging, including outdoor clothes such as a coat. If you are having your leg bandaged, you will need to wear a large lace-up shoe, two or three sizes bigger than usual, which is safe to walk in. If your arm is being bandaged, you will need to wear tops that fit loosely so that you can dress and undress easily over the bulky bandages. Please also bring your own cleanser and towel to wash your limb when the bandages are removed.

### **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 because of 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 while in bandages.





**It is important to exercise the bandaged limb in order 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 your arm as much as possible for everyday activities. You may need to use a plastic glove or a bag in order to perform any wet or dirty tasks. We may give you a sheet showing some simple range of movement exercises, which you can try while 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.

### **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 which does not improve with movement, remove the top layer of bandages, and move your limb. If the symptoms persist, then remove another layer. You may need to remove all the bandages. If you have a well-fitting compression garment, this can be worn until your next appointment. If it is comfortable, it should also be worn overnight.



### 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 you need to remove them, put your compression sleeve or stocking on instead and wear this overnight as well as in the day, if comfortable. This will maintain the reduction achieved by the bandages.

### How will my progress and treatment be monitored?

Your lymphoedema therapist will inspect your skin for dryness or sore areas and assess your limb for any change in shape each day before they re-apply the bandages. It is very important that you report any problems or difficulties you are experiencing with the bandaging at your appointment. There may be more than one therapist providing your care and they will all be working within the same bandaging principles, but there may be some small differences in the way the bandages are applied. Do not be afraid to say if someone has done something different to make the bandages 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. Please contact the clinic if you have any concerns.

### Contact details

#### 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.

