

## Kinesiology taping for lymphoedema

Kinesiology tape is a breathable, elastic, cotton fabric with a sticky backing. It can be used in the management of lymphoedema to improve the drainage of lymphatic fluid. The tape is applied to help channel the lymphatic fluid to a less congested area; it may also be used to soften hard tissue or as part of scar management.

This factsheet advises how to care for the tape and provides information on the benefits from each application of the tape.

Before the full application of the tape, your therapist will do a patch test on your skin with a small piece of tape. This will stay on for at least 24 hours to ensure that you are not allergic or sensitive to it.

If your skin ever becomes irritated when wearing kinesiology tape, remove it immediately. Kinesiology tape should not be applied to damaged skin, for example, if you have rashes, skin irritation, cuts, or burns.

### What to do before applying the tape:

#### Skin

The skin due to be taped must be clean and dry, and free from any lotions, creams or oils. Otherwise, this will affect how the tape sticks to the skin.

If the area to be taped has a large amount of hair, you should remove it by using a razor or hair removal cream. This will make it easier to apply the tape and will be less painful to remove it. Small amounts of body hair can be ignored as it will not affect the use of the tape.

#### Application

There are different patterns for kinesiology tape according to the severity and area of your swelling. It can be applied in different ways; your therapist will advise which pattern is appropriate for you.

They will then explain how to prepare the tape (e.g. what length and shape you will need to cut.) Make sure to round the corners to help prevent the edges from peeling.

Your therapist will advise the exact location for the tape and will mark it on the diagram on page 3. This will help you when you re-apply the tape the next time.



For a simple 'sling' pattern (eg. breast or neck), rip the back of the paper in the centre of the strip. Remove the backing of the lefthand side and apply the first half. Then remove the second half backing to finish the application.

For a more elaborate pattern (specified number of 'strands'); when applying the tape, only remove the backing from the 'anchor' end first. The anchor is the initial block of 1-2cm tape where the pattern starts. Place this end on the skin, and then gradually remove the rest of the backing a little at a time as it sticks to the skin.

The tape can stick to itself rather than the skin if too much backing is removed at once, so it's easier to peel off the backing slowly.

As each section of the tape is being applied, lightly rub the tape to help it stick to your skin. Try to avoid touching it day-to-day to prevent it from peeling off the skin too soon.

### **Wear of the tape**

Allow at least one hour after applying the tape before swimming, showering or doing any activity that causes sweating. After bathing, dry the tape by gently patting it with a towel. Do not use a hairdryer as this will make it difficult to remove the tape.

The tape can stay in place for up to six days. If the edges begin to peel, carefully trim them to prevent further peeling.

### **Tape removal**

The tape can be gently rolled off the skin – do not tear it away as this can cause damage to the skin and increase pain. It is usually more comfortable if the tape is rolled off in the direction of hair growth.

Applying baby oil or Vaseline over the top of the tape for 15 minutes before starting to remove the tape can help make removal easier. Removing the tape when wet may also help.

Once it is established that you are not allergic and that this treatment is beneficial, it is likely you will need to purchase your own tape. Further Kinesio<sup>R</sup> Tex Gold tape (5cm x 5cm) can be purchased from [www.kinesiotaping.co.uk](http://www.kinesiotaping.co.uk) or through online shopping sites such as Amazon.

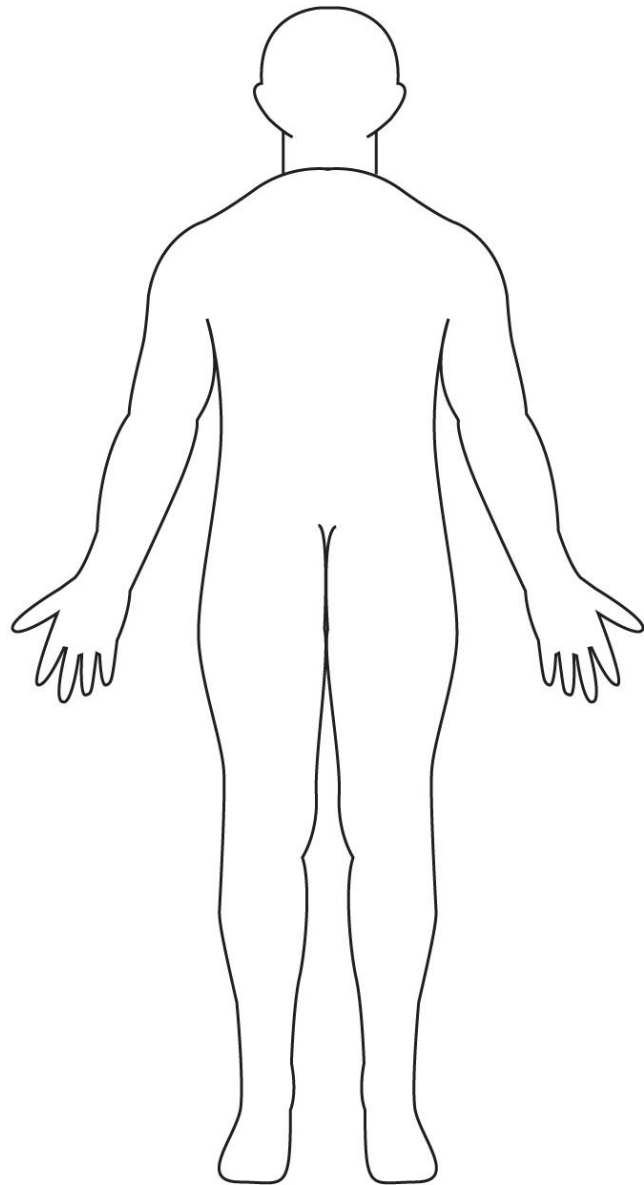
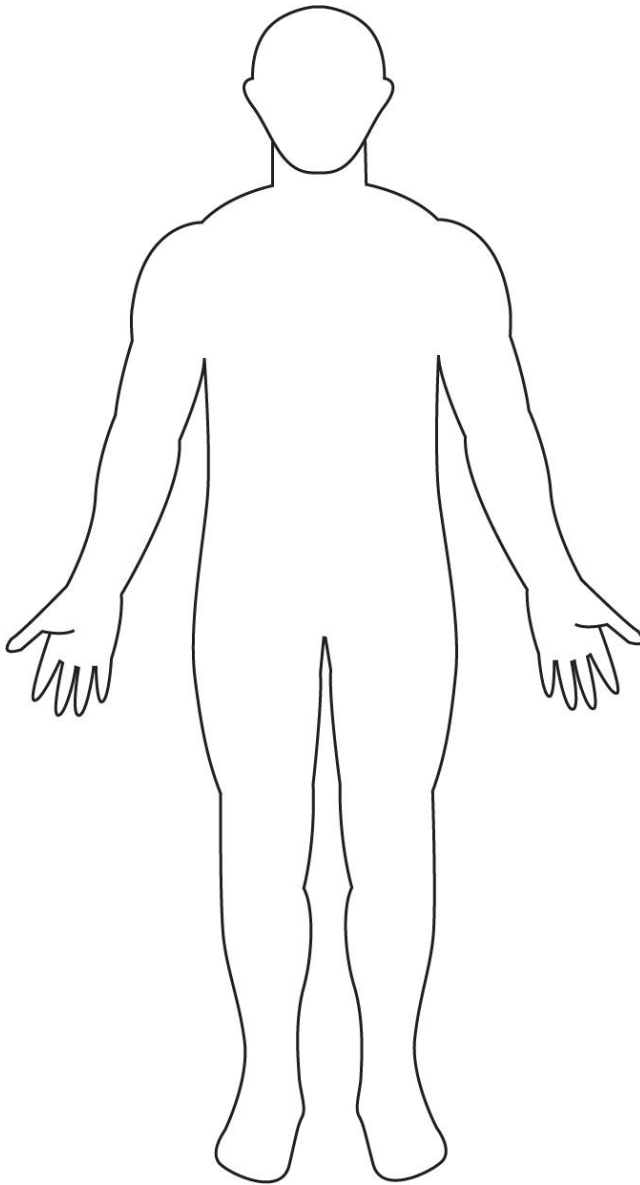
### **Contact details**

If you have any concerns regarding your use of kinesiology tape, please contact your lymphoedema therapist:

Sutton: 020 8661 3504

Chelsea: 020 7808 2981





Name:

Hospital number:

Date of patch test:

Full details of kinesiology tape used:

Signed:

Job role/ designation:

Date:



**NHS**