

LIVING WITH  
LYMPHOEDEMA

# COMPRESSION GARMENTS



As part of managing your lymphoedema, you have been advised to wear a compression/support garment. This garment is specially designed to support the swollen area, providing firm but comfortable compression that will then encourage better drainage of fluids back into the blood circulation.

There is a large range of garments available, both 'off the shelf' and custom fit, varying in levels of compression, type of material and even choice of colour. The wearing of the compression garment is an ongoing treatment for your swelling. Not wearing your garment may increase your risk of the swelling becoming worse, or the swelling returning. However, the garments cannot do all the work on their own which is why you should continue to exercise gently if you are able. It's important to be active within your range of ability and comfort.

## **Danger signs**

The compression garment should feel firm and supportive but never tight or painful. Please remove at once should you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Your fingers/toes become white, blue or mottled
- You experience pins and needles which does not go away on moving the limb
- You experience pain
- The garment has become loose and is slipping and causing further swelling or discomfort
- If you have any doubts

## Tips

- Think of your compression garment as another item of clothing. Put it on in the morning and take it off at the end of the day.
- You may also have a night time/sleep garment which is safe to sleep in.
- Wear your garment when exercising as it aids with the movement of fluid and helps the muscles to work more effectively. Your muscles act like a pump to encourage drainage and prevent fluid from building up in your tissue.
- It's important to get a smooth fit at all times. Wrinkles will dig into your skin and cause further damage. As will folding over or turning back the edges - do not do this.
- It's best to moisturise when removing your garment at the end of the day. Leave the moisturiser for around 15-20 minutes to absorb into your skin before applying your night/sleep garment.
- If your legs are affected, try to elevate them when sitting and avoid sleeping in a chair at night.

## Care of your garment

Always follow the manufacturer's washing instructions for your garment.

- Do not use a fabric softener or bleach.
- If hand washing, roll the garment in a towel to squeeze it dry.
- Most garments can be machine washed on a 30-40 degree cycle
- Leave to dry naturally - do not use direct heat (such as a radiator).
- The comfiwave garment can be tumble dried on a cool setting.

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01926 838806

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