



The phases of your lymphoedema journey

When living with lymphoedema, you will experience ups and downs in many areas of life, including the amount of swelling in your affected limb and overall health. As this happens, the treatment you need may also change. Here we explain why.

Intensive treatment phase

This phase is used to treat people with lymphoedema and swelling that can be reduced with focused or 'intensive' treatment. This aims to clear as much excess fluid out of the affected area as quickly as possible to reduce swelling and relieve symptoms like pain, leaking and reduced mobility.

Compression therapy and lymphatic drainage, a type of massage, are often used in combination to achieve this. Compression bandaging or a wrap may be used as they can be reapplied frequently as the swelling reduces quickly. If skin changes or a wound is present, intensive skin and wound care may also be needed. The intensive phase may be uncomfortable and inconvenient in the short term but it aims to rapidly improve limb health in a short or 'intensive' period. Once the improvements are stable, you enter the maintenance phase.

Maintenance treatment phase

This is the long-term phase of treatment, which aims to 'maintain' the benefits of the intensive phase. Once your limb volume is reduced and has remained the same for a period of time, your healthcare professional will recommend a compression garment, e.g. wrap or hosiery for your every day use. This should be discussed with you so you are happy with the choice and able to fit its use into your daily routine in the long term, along with skin care and exercise, which is described in more detail on p.32.

Preventative treatment phase

Compression hosiery should also be used in a preventative phase before swelling and other symptoms occur, for example, if you have known risk factors for the development of lymphoedema, such as surgery or damage to the lymph vessels. ➡

