



Living well with lymphoedema: tips for every day

Living with a long-term condition like lymphoedema can have its ups and downs. Here we offer advice on coming to terms with it and what you can do to make it easier on yourself.



One of the hardest things to come to terms with when you are first diagnosed with a condition like lymphoedema is that it is with you for the long run, and so is something you need to factor into your everyday life.

To help you do this, think about your motivation for caring for yourself and being able to manage your condition. What do you want to be able to do – play with your grandchildren, go to work, or go to the gym? Knowing what is important to you will help you set up

and maintain the habits of caring for your lymphoedema to meet your goals.

Set a goal

To do this, work out what you want to achieve, and then break down what you need to do to get there into small steps.

As well as the physical aspects of managing your care – compression, skin care, activity and nutrition – it is important to look at your psychological wellbeing, take ownership of your condition, focus on your priorities, and

concentrate on things such as getting enough sleep, rest and pacing yourself.

Psychological wellbeing

People with lymphoedema often report losing their self-confidence and their feeling of self-worth, so it helps to be more nurturing to yourself and see yourself as important.

Forgiveness is important. It's normal for people with a long-term health condition to occasionally feel upset, annoyed or frustrated – let yourself have these feelings and then work out what you need to do to move forward. Instead of feeling cross about what you can't do, try and think differently about the situation and work out what you can do instead.

Think about what makes you happy – you might catch up with a friend who you haven't seen for ages, watch something special on TV or read a good book.

Taking ownership

Accepting your condition can be difficult but is an important part of living well with lymphoedema. Taking time to work out your priorities and values will let you work out the steps you can take to achieve these goals. If these are realistic and achievable, once you have met them, you can set yourself new goals. Reflecting on how far you have

come will help you see how well you are managing your condition and encourage you to keep progressing.

Sleep and rest

A good night's sleep is really important to support your health. Sleeping lying down in bed helps your lymphoedema by reducing the swelling caused by

gravity, as well as ensuring that your immune system works properly. Take regular breaks throughout the day and elevate your legs to counteract the effects of gravity to reduce swelling.



Pacing

You may notice that when you're feeling well, you have an active day, and then you're exhausted the next day as you've done too much. Working out how much you are able to do without feeling wiped out the next day will help you to pace yourself. This ties in to setting yourself realistic goals as discussed above.

Looking after your whole self

When you think about self-care, you might automatically focus on the physical aspects of this – wearing your compression and looking after your skin. If you can also think about your emotional wellbeing as part of your self-care, this will help make all aspects of your lymphoedema management more achievable and you'll see more benefit from the hard work you are putting in. ➡