

Living with lymphoedema after breast cancer



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Introduction

If you have recently developed lymphoedema, or have an ongoing problem with lymphoedema, this booklet will give you a general overview of the condition, how it can affect your life and how it may be managed.

For information about the risks of developing lymphoedema and for ideas on trying to prevent it, please see our factsheet **Reducing the risk of lymphoedema.**

What is lymphoedema?

Lymphoedema is swelling caused by a build-up of lymph fluid in the surface tissues of the body. It develops most commonly in the arms or legs although it can affect other areas of the body. Following breast cancer treatment this build-up may occur as a result of damage to the lymphatic system because of surgery and/or radiotherapy to the lymph nodes (glands) under the arm (the axilla) and in the surrounding area. Sometimes it can be due to cancer cells blocking the lymph system.

One, some or all of the lymph nodes under the arm are often removed during breast surgery to check whether any cancer cells are present. The lymph nodes and vessels that have been damaged or removed cannot be replaced so the lymphatic drainage routes are reduced/altered. This can cause lymph fluid to build up in the surrounding tissues. It is not fully understood why lymphoedema develops in some people and not others. Lymphoedema may develop soon after surgery or radiotherapy, or it can occur many years later and may be triggered by infection or injury to the limb. It is important to remember that there is a lifetime risk of developing lymphoedema following breast cancer treatment where the lymph nodes have been removed or damaged.

Lymphoedema is a long-term condition, which means that once it has developed it can be controlled but is unlikely to ever go away completely. Treatment is aimed at encouraging other healthy parts of the lymph system to work more effectively and to prevent further problems or complications. The symptoms of lymphoedema usually respond well to treatment and this means that in most cases it can be controlled. Working with a lymphoedema specialist, people can usually do a lot for themselves to help manage the condition.

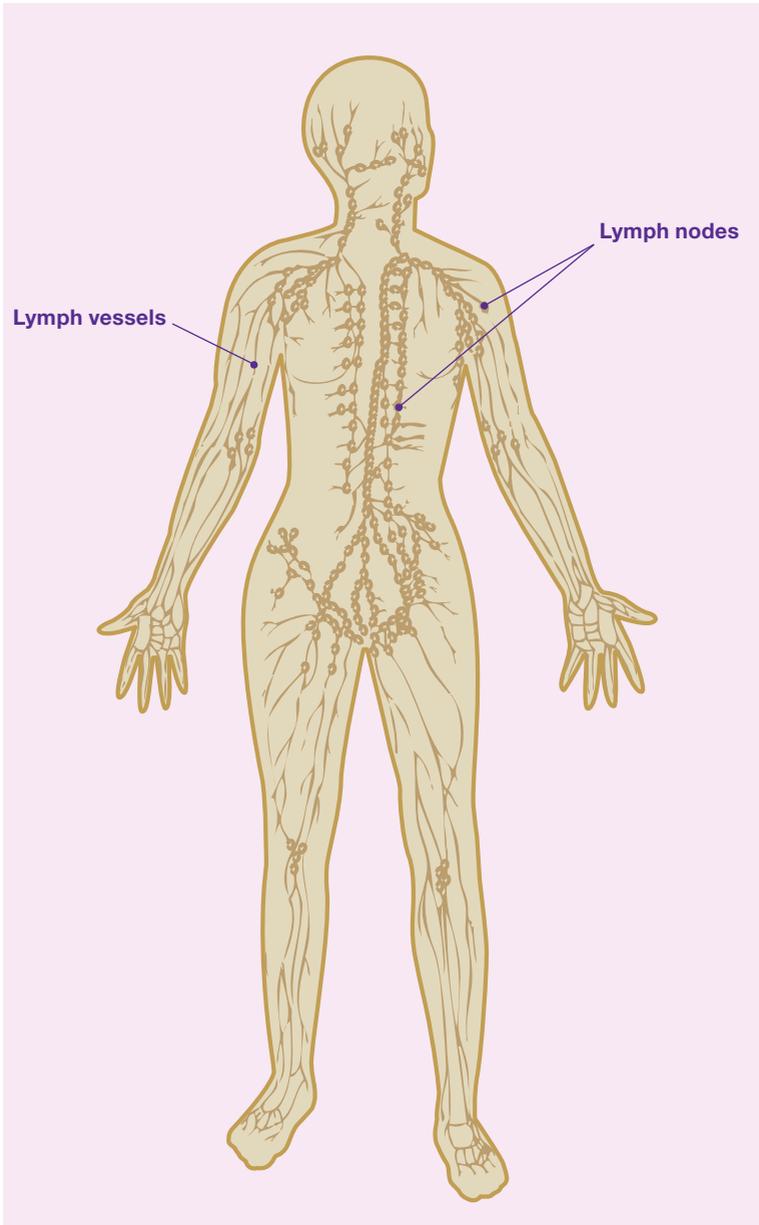
What is the lymphatic system?

The following brief description of the lymphatic system may help you to understand how lymphoedema can occur.

The lymphatic system is made up of a network of small vessels (similar to blood vessels), a deeper system of lymph glands that extend throughout the body, and other lymphatic tissue such as the tonsils, liver and spleen. The lymphatic system works to maintain and protect the balance of fluid in the surface tissues of the body by draining, filtering and transporting lymphatic fluid around the body.

The lymphatic vessels transport a straw-coloured fluid called lymph which flows very slowly but continuously through the lymph vessels to the lymph nodes where it is filtered. Lymph is made up of water and protein and also contains white blood cells called lymphocytes, which help your body to fight infection. The lymph nodes help fight infection too by filtering out waste products like bacteria. They can also filter out cancer cells that have spread from a breast cancer, destroying some of them in the process.

The lymphatic system



What physical symptoms might I experience?

Lymphoedema symptoms can be very variable, and many people who develop lymphoedema only have mild symptoms that can be well controlled. It is therefore very important to seek help as soon as you notice any swelling, tightness, heaviness or aching.

Swelling

Swelling frequently develops in the arm or chest area immediately after breast surgery. This is part of the healing process and often settles within a short time without any treatment. If your arm, hand or breast area is swollen for more than a few weeks after surgery, or if swelling develops later on, or after your cancer treatment is completed, you should get advice from your breast care nurse or a member of your specialist team as soon as possible. If lymphoedema is diagnosed, you may remain under the care of your breast care nurse or be referred to a specialist lymphoedema service.

Swelling in the breast or chest wall following treatment for breast cancer can be uncomfortable and sometimes painful. A well-fitting bra with wide side straps and side pieces can help to support the breast and ease some of the discomfort.

Tightness

The arm can feel tight when there is extra fluid in the tissues. Some people feel tightness in the arm without the arm appearing swollen. Gentle exercise can help to relieve any feelings of tightness. For more information see the 'Arm stiffness' section opposite.

Dry skin

Where there is swelling present the skin is stretched and can become dry and flaky and sometimes feel itchy. Dry, cracked skin increases the risk of infection (cellulitis) so it is important to keep the skin supple and well moisturised. Moisturise your arm at the end of every day (so that it has the chance to work overnight) with an unperfumed moisturising cream.

Arm stiffness

If your arm is swollen, it may limit movement in the joints. Exercise your arm and shoulder regularly in order to reduce stiffness and encourage lymph drainage. If you were given specific exercises after your surgery or radiotherapy it is vital to continue doing them for as long as recommended (we produce a DVD and leaflet called **Getting fitter, feeling stronger: exercises to help recovery after breast cancer surgery** which features these exercises). Try to keep up your normal level of activity as much as possible, but avoid movements which strain your arm or mean it is in the same position for a period of time. See the 'Exercise' section on page 15 for more detail.

Discomfort

Most people will experience some level of discomfort with lymphoedema. Many people feel a tight, heavy feeling in the arm and the discomfort tends to be dull and vague. Try doing some gentle exercise. When you are sitting, rest your arm on a pillow or cushion but not so that it is above the height of your shoulder. Pain relief such as paracetamol can sometimes help. If the discomfort continues or you experience sharp or sudden pain, then speak to your breast care nurse, doctor or lymphoedema specialist who may be able to find out the cause.

Infection

If your arm or chest area suddenly becomes red, tender and hot, with increased swelling or a rash, you may have developed an infection. You may also have flu-like symptoms which can sometimes be the first sign of an infection. These symptoms need urgent attention from your GP (local doctor) and you will probably need to start taking antibiotics straightaway.

If you have repeated infections you may be prescribed a low-dose antibiotic to take continuously. If you are travelling away from home, particularly if you are going abroad, it is recommended that you take a supply of antibiotics with you in case you develop an infection while you are away. You may want to talk this through with your GP or lymphoedema specialist who will need to prescribe the antibiotics.

The Lymphoedema Support Network has a factsheet on infection called *What is cellulitis?* – see ‘Other organisations’ at the back of this booklet.

Where can I go for treatment?

In many cases the breast care nurse at your hospital will be able to help and advise you about mild lymphoedema. If you have swelling for some time, or it is associated with other symptoms, you may need to be referred to a specialist lymphoedema service for advice and treatment.

If you would like to find out where your nearest clinic is, ask your breast care nurse or telephone our Helpline on **0808 800 6000** (Text Relay **18001**). We have a list of clinics throughout the country and can give you details on how to contact them. The lymphoedema organisations listed at the end of the booklet will also be able to help.

What treatments are available?

Most people with lymphoedema have mild to moderate symptoms. However, for some people the lymphoedema can be more severe. Your breast care nurse or lymphoedema specialist will assess your swelling and discuss the best way to manage your symptoms.

The aim of treatment for lymphoedema is to encourage lymph fluid to move away from the swollen area and to try and improve the physical symptoms and stop them getting worse. The way this is done will vary depending on how severe your lymphoedema is but your treatment may include some, or all, of the following approaches at different times. You can do quite a lot of these things yourself alongside any professional treatment you are having.

- Skin care
- Exercise
- Compression garments
- Compression bandages
- Manual lymphatic drainage
- Simple lymphatic drainage

Skin care

Skin care is important because lymph fluid in the arm or chest area, together with a decrease in infection-fighting lymph nodes, means infections are more likely. Small breaks in or trauma to the skin, or some skin conditions which cause the skin to become red and sore, can become a site for infection. Dry, flaky or cracked skin can also lead to infection.

If an infection develops it can lead to further damage in the lymph channels through scarring and eventually make the lymphoedema worse.

Here are some ways to keep your skin in the best possible condition.

- Wash your skin with warm water every day. If your fingers are swollen, carefully wash and dry between them to stop fungal infections which can develop in warm, moist areas.
- Moisturise your arm at the end of every day with an unperfumed moisturising cream. This will help to keep the skin supple and stop it becoming dry and cracked.
- Using gentle strokes apply the cream in the most comfortable way for you. Always finish with the last stroke in the direction of the hair, ensuring that the hairs are laid down. This helps to reduce spots forming at the hair follicles.
- Treat any cuts, scratches or insect bites on the swollen area promptly by cleaning with warm water and applying an antiseptic cream or spray to reduce the risk of infection (see the section on 'Infection' on page 10 for more information). If it is a deep cut, use a dry dressing with a loosely applied bandage or a plaster if your skin's in good condition. If you notice a rash or redness on your arm, with or without pain, or an insect bite that does not heal, contact your doctor as soon as possible. You may need a course of antibiotics.

Try to avoid situations/things that could lead to you developing an infection by:

- wearing gloves when washing up and using harsh detergents, gardening or taking hot dishes out of the oven to prevent damage to the skin
- using insect repellent to avoid bites or stings
- avoiding scratches or bites from pets or other animals
- avoiding blood samples from or injections into your affected arm – the risk of any medical procedure making the affected arm worse is small but where possible should be avoided. If both your arms are affected, blood samples may be taken from your legs or feet. However, in an emergency situation it may be necessary to use your affected arm/s. If you have acupuncture ask your therapist to avoid the affected areas
- taking extra care if removing underarm hair (or hair on your arm) – an electric razor or depilatory cream are safest as they are less likely to damage the skin (if using a depilatory cream use with caution after patch testing)
- taking care when cutting your nails and avoiding cutting your cuticles or pushing them back too harshly
- taking care when using sewing needles, DIY tools or scissors.

Extreme changes in temperature can cause increased swelling. Try to avoid this by:

- not spending much time in very hot baths, steam rooms and saunas where the body gets very hot then cools quickly
- protecting skin from the risk of burns including sunburn – high factor sunscreen, applied frequently, is advisable
- not spending too long in direct contact with ice or snow.

Lymph drainage can be affected if there is any tightness around the swollen arm. Try to avoid:

- tight or narrow bra straps and tight sleeves, watches or rings – these can stop the lymph fluid flowing away from the swollen area
- carrying a heavy handbag on the shoulder of the affected arm/ chest area if possible
- having blood pressure readings taken on the swollen arm whenever possible (you can request a blood pressure reading be taken from your leg if both arms are affected).

Exercise

Research shows that exercise is a good way of managing the swelling because movement of the muscles encourages the fluid to move away from the swollen area. Although you may already use your arm actively in your everyday life or work and get plenty of exercise in this way, extra exercise may be helpful to reduce discomfort and tenderness and keep your joints supple. If you have been fitted with a lymphoedema sleeve (see section on 'Compression garments' on page 17), always wear it when you are exercising or when you are very active as long as it is comfortable to do so.

Any exercise you take should be done in a gentle and controlled way. If you are in any doubt, ask your lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse for advice. If you have any pain or discomfort in your arm or shoulder with any movement or exercise tell your specialist or breast care nurse.

Arm and shoulder exercises

It is important to keep your shoulder moving to avoid stiffness developing. Our DVD and leaflet **Getting fitter, feeling stronger: exercises to help recovery after breast cancer surgery** feature arm and shoulder exercises for people who have had treatment for breast cancer. If you find you can't do a movement fully or the exercises cause you pain, it is best to stop and get advice from your lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse.

You can exercise your arm a little when you are walking around by bending and straightening it. To relieve pressure and swelling in the hand try opening and closing it as if squeezing a rubber ball. Try to avoid letting your arm hang down for long periods as this can encourage the lymph fluid to collect. Your lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse may give you some specific shoulder, arm and hand exercises to encourage movement and help improve lymph drainage. If you have been fitted with a lymphoedema sleeve, it's advisable to wear this when doing these exercises.

Sport and fitness

Sports and activities that you did before you developed lymphoedema and those you wish to take up now are still possible as long as you return to/start them slowly and stop if you have any discomfort or you notice further swelling. Again, if you have been fitted with a lymphoedema sleeve always wear it when you are exercising.

If you want to increase your activity levels or take up a new sport, make sure you do it gradually. If you use gym equipment, talk to an instructor and avoid using heavy weights. Gradual increase in activity is recommended. Our DVD **Getting fitter, feeling stronger: exercises to help recovery after breast cancer surgery** also features a fitness class which is suitable for people 12 weeks after surgery and beyond and aims to help you increase your fitness.

General activities

Try not to use the arm for lengthy, strenuous activities such as lifting, carrying heavy shopping, or pushing heavy equipment like lawn mowers. If you do need to do these activities, try to do other things in between to break up the length of time spent on them.

Compression garments

If the swelling is in your arm and/or hand you may be fitted with a compression garment in the form of a sleeve or glove to help control your lymphoedema. Your lymphoedema specialist will assess which size and type of garment is best for you and this will usually be available on prescription. Compression garments are designed to prevent further swelling by encouraging lymph fluid to drain away from the affected arm. The garment provides a firm resistance against which the lymph vessels are squeezed by the muscles during activity. This allows the lymph fluid to move up the arm more effectively.

Unless your specialist suggests otherwise, the garment is worn all day and taken off at night. Wearing the garment may feel quite strange at first but it should not cause pain or discomfort and once on, it should feel comfortable and supportive. You will normally be provided with two garments so that one can be washed while the other is being worn. Regular washing according to the care instructions will prolong the life of the garment but you will need replacement garments every six months to ensure that the compression remains correct for the amount of swelling you have.

Apply and remove your garment carefully. You may find that rubber gloves are helpful for easing it on. You might also find it helpful to hold onto a fixed support, such as a towel rail. This gives some resistance against which you can pull your garment up evenly. You may find it helpful to put your garment on by turning it two-thirds inside out to start with and pulling the first third on. Then pull the rest of the garment up a little at a time. This will make sure that the garment is applied evenly and ensure you

get the correct compression. If you have great difficulty putting your garment on or taking it off, speak to your lymphoedema specialist about using an applicator.

It is important that the garment does not have any wrinkles and that the fabric is even so that it fits well. Never turn the top of the garment over if it seems too long as this will put too much pressure on one area. You may need a shorter garment instead – again, talk to your lymphoedema specialist.

Put your garment on in the morning when you get up as this is when there should be less swelling. If it feels too much to wear the garment all day, start by just wearing it for a few hours each day, gradually increasing the time so that you are eventually wearing it all day. If you find the garment difficult to cope with, and your lymphoedema specialist has checked that it is the correct size, try wearing it when you are at your most active – for example, when you are doing sports, gardening, housework or physical work – and then take it off when you are least active. The compression garment is most useful when your muscles are working actively and least useful during rest. However, always wear your garment when flying as the change in pressure can affect your swelling. The garment should be worn for the duration of the flight and for at least two hours afterwards.

You need to be aware of certain circumstances and should contact your lymphoedema specialist if they arise.

- If your weight changes, you may notice that your garment becomes too tight or too loose. If you have concerns about the fit of your garment, always contact your lymphoedema specialist because you may need to be measured for a new one.
- If you find it painful to wear your garment, or you notice a change in sensation such as numbness or tingling in your arm or possibly a change in colour at the tips of your fingers, take it off and contact your lymphoedema specialist immediately, as the garment may be too tight.

- Sometimes the material of the garment can make your skin sore, particularly in the elbow crease or over bony areas on your hand. You may be able to try other garments so talk to your lymphoedema specialist, breast care nurse or GP.
- If you notice that swelling appears in areas not covered by the garment such as the fingers or hand, you may need a different garment.
- If you develop an infection in your arm, your garment may be painful to wear. It is best to take off the garment until the infection has settled down and start wearing it again once your arm feels less painful. If your skin has become sore as a result of the infection, wait until it has improved because the garment may damage the skin further. See page 10 for more information on infection.
- After wearing a compression garment for six months, the fit and comfort will need to be reassessed and you should contact your lymphoedema specialist.

Compression bandages

Compression bandages are used when the swelling has made the limb a difficult size or shape for compression garments to be fitted. They are also used if the skin has become damaged and sore as using compression garments at this time may cause further damage.

Several layers of bandages are put on the arm by a lymphoedema specialist or another healthcare professional who has received appropriate training to do this. Initially these can make the arm seem bigger than normal and they may feel bulky and cumbersome. The bandages may be removed and reapplied daily (depending on the severity). Over two to three weeks of daily bandaging the arm shape and size will change so that compression garments can be fitted to control the swelling that remains.

Your lymphoedema specialist will discuss the aims of compression bandaging with you if it is felt you would benefit from this type of treatment. You will need to wear clothes that will accommodate the extra bulk of the bandages and be able to attend the clinic on a regular basis, as arranged with your lymphoedema specialist, to have the bandages changed. It is important to move your arm around as much as possible while the bandages are in place, as this will improve their effectiveness.

Manual lymphatic drainage (MLD)

MLD is a specialised type of lymphatic drainage carried out by a trained therapist. It can be used for any degree of swelling caused by lymphoedema but it is usually used when the swelling is severe or difficult to manage. MLD can be particularly useful over areas where compression garments cannot easily be worn, such as the chest area.

The MLD therapist uses specialised hand movements to stimulate lymph drainage and move lymph fluid away from areas where it has collected. It is a slow, rhythmical treatment that takes time to complete and must be carried out by a trained practitioner. MLD is not normally used as a treatment for lymphoedema on its own and is usually combined with other treatments to achieve a better result.

Your lymphoedema specialist will be able to tell you if MLD may help you and how to access this treatment. Many MLD trained therapists work independently. To find out if there is a therapist in your area talk to your lymphoedema specialist or contact The Lymphoedema Support Network, British Lymphology Society or MLD UK (see the list of 'Other organisations' at the back of this booklet).

Simple lymphatic drainage (SLD)

Your lymphoedema specialist may teach you a simple type of massage based on the principles of MLD which aims to improve lymph drainage in areas of the body near the swelling. If you find it difficult to do the massage yourself, someone close to you can be taught how to help you with it.

If you have been taught SLD it should be carried out daily to stimulate the lymphatic system regularly. You need to do SLD carefully and not change the sequence of the movements because this will affect how well it works. The massage technique is best done without using oils or cream on the skin so that good contact is kept between the hand and the skin. The Lymphoedema Support Network has a self-help DVD which demonstrates SLD. See 'Other organisations' at the back of the booklet.

Other treatments for lymphoedema

Compression pumps

There are some pumps specifically designed to treat lymphoedema in conjunction with other treatments, but they should never be used without the advice and close supervision of your lymphoedema therapist. The newer, mechanical compression pumps mimic the effect of MLD by squeezing the swollen arm in a plastic sleeve that inflates and deflates at regular intervals.

Liposuction

This is a surgical procedure in which fat is removed from the affected area. It is not widely acknowledged as a part of the treatment for lymphoedema in the UK and is only considered for the most severe cases. It should not be considered before other therapies such as exercise, compression bandaging and MLD have been tried. The aim is to improve movement and reduce pain and discomfort. People who have this procedure are still advised to wear an extra strong compression sleeve and often this needs to be worn 24 hours a day to maintain the loss of volume from the arm.

Kinesio taping method

Kinesio tape is a relatively new type of treatment for lymphoedema that uses a particular type of adhesive tape applied to the skin by a trained therapist. The tape lifts the skin during movement and encourages lymph fluid to move towards the uncongested areas and the lymph nodes. Kinesio tape is usually used with other forms of treatment. However, it is sometimes used in isolation to manage lymphoedema if it develops in areas such as the breast and chest wall. It can also be used to soften and reduce hard, firm tissue (fibrosis).

Low-level laser therapy

This treatment uses a low energy laser on the lymphatic channels to improve the flow of lymph fluid. Although this type of treatment is still being researched the early studies suggest it may be helpful for reducing the amount of swelling, fibrosis and pain.

As the above are newer treatments further studies are needed to look at their effectiveness in the treatment of lymphoedema.

Maintaining a healthy weight

Being overweight can affect how much your arm swells and how you respond to treatment for lymphoedema so it is important to try to keep your weight within normal limits.

There is no special diet that will help but if you are overweight, try to follow a healthy, well-balanced eating plan and a regular exercise programme. If you are concerned about your weight, your lymphoedema specialist or doctor may be able to advise you on how to get started, or they may refer you to a dietitian.

What changes should I look out for?

Managing lymphoedema successfully needs regular, ongoing treatment and advice from your lymphoedema specialist.

If you are concerned about your arm or chest area and/or breast at any time, you should contact your GP, lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse, but particularly if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- painful arm, chest and/or breast with redness, or a rash, hot to the touch and which may be accompanied by flu-like symptoms (see section on 'Infection', page 10)
- painful arm, chest and/or breast with possible increased swelling or other signs of problems with circulation, such as a noticeable change in colour or enlarged and visible veins
- increased swelling of the whole arm or isolated areas such as the fingers, chest or breast
- changes in feeling or ability to move your affected arm, hand or fingers.

Will I need to change my lifestyle?

Lymphoedema can alter your lifestyle in a number of ways. You may find that it affects you on an emotional level as well as on a physical one.

An understanding of the condition and why it has developed may help you adjust to any changes that might be necessary. Knowing what might make the swelling worse and either avoiding or modifying these situations may help you control your lymphoedema. Exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet to maintain or reduce your weight will all help to control your lymphoedema. For a few people the swelling may restrict movement and this can make work, household jobs and daily activities such as dressing, washing or eating very difficult. If you think you need extra help, ask your lymphoedema specialist or GP to refer you to an occupational therapist who will be able to assess your needs.

Can I still go on holiday?

There is no reason why having lymphoedema should stop you enjoying holidays, but some extra care may be necessary.

- Wear loose, comfortable clothes when travelling to ensure that they are not too tight on your shoulder, arm and wrist.
- When wearing jewellery or a watch make sure it isn't too tight.
- Use a suitcase on wheels rather than one you carry and ask for help when moving luggage around. Keep your hand baggage light and try to carry it on your back rather than your shoulder.
- Try not to sit for too long in one position; take regular breaks if travelling by car or move around if you are travelling by air. Gentle exercises can also be carried out while sitting to promote lymph flow.
- If you have been fitted with a compression garment, always remember to wear it during your journey.
- A high factor sunscreen applied regularly is essential to prevent sunburn if you are going somewhere hot. Loose cotton clothes with long sleeves will also protect your swollen arm from the sun.
- Remember to use mosquito repellent every day, particularly in the evening and at night. Mosquito bites can become infected and are very uncomfortable.
- It is a good idea to take antibiotics with you so that you can start taking them immediately if you develop an infection in your swollen arm.
- Try to avoid extremes of temperature – getting too hot then too cold, or too cold then too hot.

Coming to terms with lymphoedema

On an emotional level, you may feel that lymphoedema is harder to come to terms with than the cancer treatment itself. You may experience a mixture of feelings depending upon the degree of swelling and how it affects your daily life but it is normal to feel angry, resentful or fed up at times. You might manage these feelings better by trying to understand why they have developed and taking positive steps such as relaxation to help you cope with them.

If there are times when you feel that you are not coping very well, don't be afraid to ask for help, either from your lymphoedema specialist or breast care nurse. You may find it helpful to talk to other people who are also living with the condition. We can put you in touch with a trained volunteer who has lymphoedema so that you can share experiences and get practical and emotional support. For further information contact Breast Cancer Care's Helpline on **0808 800 6000** (Text Relay **18001**). The Discussion Forums on the Breast Cancer Care website have a specific section for people affected by lymphoedema where you can chat to other people with lymphoedema and share tips.

Some people feel that lymphoedema affects their self-confidence because favourite hobbies or activities have to be reconsidered. Talk to your lymphoedema specialist about how you can modify your activities rather than stop them altogether. Having lymphoedema can have an impact on your body image and self-esteem. This may affect you in a number of ways including how you feel about intimacy and sex. You may find our booklet **Sexuality, intimacy and breast cancer** helpful.

Sometimes the swelling cannot be hidden away easily (particularly during the summer months) and may therefore be a constant reminder of your breast cancer diagnosis. You may find that some people close to you cannot appreciate that a symptom like swelling can cause so much distress. It may be helpful for those around you to read this booklet to get a better understanding of what you are going through.

Managing your lymphoedema may mean that you need to make some adjustments to your lifestyle, but with appropriate treatment the symptoms can be reduced, helping to minimise the effect on your daily life.

Further support

Breast Cancer Care

From diagnosis, throughout treatment and beyond, our services are here every step of the way. Here is an overview of all the services we offer to people living with and beyond breast cancer.

Helpline

Our free, confidential Helpline is here for anyone who has questions about breast cancer or breast health. Your call will be answered by one of our nurses or trained staff members with experience of breast cancer. Whatever your concern, you can be confident we will understand the issues you might be facing, and that the information you receive is clear and up to date. We will also let you know where else you can go for further support.

Website

We know how important it is to understand as much as possible about your breast cancer. Our website is here round the clock giving you instant access to information when you need it. As well as clinical information, you'll find real life experiences and a daily newsblog on stories about breast cancer in the media. It's also home to the largest online breast cancer community in the UK, so you can share your questions or concerns with other people in a similar situation.

Our map of breast cancer services www.breastcancercare.org.uk/map is an interactive tool, designed to help you find breast cancer services in your local area, wherever you live in the UK.

Discussion Forums

Through our Discussion Forums you can exchange tips on coping with the side effects of treatment, ask questions, share experiences and talk through concerns online. Our dedicated areas for popular topics should make it easy for you to find the information you're looking for. The Discussion Forums are easy to use and professionally hosted. If you're feeling anxious or just need to hear from someone else who's been there, they offer a way to gain support and reassurance from others in a similar situation to you.

One-to-One Support

Our One-to-One Support service can put you in touch with someone who knows what you're going through. Just tell us what you'd like to talk about (the shock of your diagnosis, understanding treatment options or your feelings after finishing treatment, for example), and we can find someone who's right for you. Our experienced volunteers give you the chance to talk openly away from family and friends.

Live Chat

We host weekly Live Chat sessions on our website, offering you a private space to discuss your concerns with others – getting instant responses to messages and talking about issues that are important to you. Each session is professionally facilitated and there's a specialist nurse on hand to answer questions.

Ask the Nurse

If you find it difficult to talk about breast cancer, we can answer your questions by email instead. Our Ask the Nurse service is available on the website – complete a short form that includes your question and we'll get back to you with a confidential, personal response.

Information and Support Sessions and Courses

We run Moving Forward Information and Support Sessions for people living with and beyond breast cancer. These sessions cover a range of topics including adjusting and adapting after a breast cancer diagnosis, exercise and keeping well, and menopause. In addition, we offer Lingerie Evenings where you will learn more about choosing a bra after surgery.

We also offer a HeadStrong service where you can find alternatives to a wig and meet other people who understand the distress of losing your hair. Our Younger Women's Forums, Living with Secondary Breast Cancer courses and Seca Support Groups for people with secondary breast cancer are also here to offer specific, tailored support.

Information Resources

Our free Information Resources for anyone affected by breast cancer include factsheets, booklets and DVDs. They are here to answer your questions, help you make informed decisions and ensure you know what to expect. All of our information is written and reviewed regularly by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer, so you can trust the information is up to date, clear and accurate. You can order our publications using our order form, which can be requested from the Helpline. All our publications can also be ordered or downloaded as PDFs from our website.

Other organisations

Lymphoedema organisations

British Lymphology Society (BLS)
9–11 Oldbury Road, Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL51 0HH

Telephone: **01452 790 178**
Email: **info@thebls.com**
Website: **www.thebls.com**

The British Lymphology Society (BLS) is a multidisciplinary group of healthcare professionals and other interested parties directly involved in the management of lymphoedema or interested in furthering the work of the Society. The main objectives of BLS are to promote awareness of lymphoedema and to establish standards of treatment and long-term management of the condition. Its website includes a directory of lymphoedema clinics around the country.

The Lymphoedema Support Network

St Luke's Crypt, Sydney Street
London SW3 6NH

Telephone: **020 7351 4480** (Information and support)
Telephone: **020 7351 0990** (Administration)
Fax: **020 7349 9809**
Email: **adminlsn@lymphoedema.freeserve.co.uk**
Website: **www.lymphoedema.org**

The Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN) is a national patient-led charity which provides information and support to people with lymphoedema. It runs a telephone helpline, produces a quarterly newsletter, self-help DVDs and a wide range of factsheets, and maintains an up-to-date website. It works to raise awareness of lymphoedema and campaigns for better national standards of care.

MLD UK

PO Box 14491, Glenrothes
Fife KY6 3YE

Telephone/Fax: **0844 800 1988**

Email: **admin@mlduk.org.uk**

Website: **www.mlduk.org.uk**

Send a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a list of MLD (Manual Lymphatic Drainage) practitioners in the UK.

Cancer organisations

Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ

General enquiries: **020 7840 7840**

Helpline: **0808 808 0000**

Website: **www.macmillan.org.uk**

Textphone: **0808 808 0121 or Text Relay**

Macmillan Cancer Support provides practical, medical, emotional and financial support to people living with cancer and their carers and families. Over the phone, its cancer support specialists can answer questions about cancer types and treatments, provide practical and financial support to help people live with cancer. Its website features expert, high-quality information on cancer types and treatments, emotional, financial and practical help, and an online community where people can share information and support. Macmillan also funds expert health and social care professionals such as nurses, doctors and benefits advisers.

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Find out more

We offer a range of services to people affected by breast cancer. From diagnosis, through treatment and beyond, our services are here every step of the way.



To request a free leaflet containing further information about our services, please choose from the list overleaf, complete your contact details and return to us at the **FREEPOST** address or order online at www.breastcancercare.org.uk/publications

Donate today

We hope you found this publication useful. We are able to provide our publications free of charge thanks to the generosity of our supporters. We would be grateful if you would consider making a donation today to help us continue to offer our free services to anyone who needs them.

To make a donation please complete your details overleaf and return to us with your cheque/PO/CAF voucher at the **FREEPOST** address: **Breast Cancer Care, FREEPOST RRRKZ-ARZY-YCKG, 5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS**

Or to make a donation online using a credit or debit card, please visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk/donate-to-us

I'd like more information

Please send me:

- Support for people recently diagnosed with breast cancer (SM21)
- Support for people having treatment for breast cancer (SM22)
- Support for people living with and beyond breast cancer (SM23)
- Support for younger women with breast cancer (SM24)
- Support for people living with secondary breast cancer (SM25)

I'd like to donate

Please accept my donation of £10 / £20 / my own choice of £

- I enclose a cheque/PO/CAF voucher made payable to Breast Cancer Care.
(Please don't post cash.)

Or to make a donation online using a credit or debit card, please visit

www.breastcancercare.org.uk/donate-to-us

Thank you for your kind donation.

My details

Name

Address

Postcode

Email address

From time to time we may wish to send you further information on our services and activities.

- Please tick if you are happy to receive emails from us
- Please tick here if you do not want to receive post from us

Breast Cancer Care will not pass your details to any other organisation or third party.

I am a (please tick):

- person who has/who has had breast cancer
 - friend/relative of someone with breast cancer
 - healthcare professional
 - other (please state)
-

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5-13 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0NS**

This booklet can be downloaded from our website, **www.breastcancercare.org.uk** It is also available in large print, Braille or on audio CD on request by phoning **0845 092 0808**.

This booklet has been produced by Breast Cancer Care's clinical specialists and reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer.

If you would like a list of the sources we used to research this publication, email publications@breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0845 092 0808.

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Email cym@breastcancercare.org.uk

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Telephone 0845 077 1893

Email nrc@breastcancercare.org.uk

Scotland and Northern Ireland

Telephone 0845 077 1892

Email sco@breastcancercare.org.uk



Breast Cancer Care is here for anyone affected by breast cancer. We bring people together, provide information and support, and campaign for improved standards of care. We use our understanding of people's experience of breast cancer and our clinical expertise in everything we do.

Visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call our free Helpline on **0808 800 6000** (Text Relay **18001**).

Interpreters are available in any language. Calls may be monitored for training purposes. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Breast Cancer Care.

Central Office

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© Breast Cancer Care, November 2011, BCC5

ISBN 978 1 907001 642

Edition 5, next planned review 2013

Registered charity in England and Wales (1017658)

Registered charity in Scotland (SC038104)

Registered company in England (2447182)

