



St Oswald's  
Hospice

# Application & Care of Compression Garments

St Oswald's Hospice  
*Lymphoedema Service*

Quality time for everyone

**The Lymphoedema Service at St Oswald's Hospice offers a service to individuals with lymphoedema, whatever the cause. We help patients to understand their condition and offer advice on how they can adapt everyday activities in order to successfully control their lymphoedema.**

### **Why are compression garments important for lymphoedema?**

Lymphoedema occurs when fluid builds up, causing swelling. Compression garments are an essential part of lymphoedema treatment. They help reduce swelling, improve circulation, and prevent further fluid buildup in affected limbs.

Compression garments provide external pressure to help the lymphatic system drain excess fluid, reducing swelling and discomfort. Wearing them regularly can improve your quality of life.

### **How to apply compression garments effectively**

#### **When should I wear my garment?**

Your compression garments should be applied first thing in the morning and removed in the evening unless you have been instructed to do otherwise by your lymphoedema practitioner.

#### **Body lotions/ Emollients**

When applying moisturiser to your arm and leg, please check to ensure that it has fully soaked into your skin before putting on your garment. Over time, a build-up of moisturiser can damage the garment material. Check to ensure that all the moisturiser has absorbed into your skin, before putting on your garment.

#### **Folds and wrinkles**

All folds and wrinkles should be fully removed from your compression garment when it is applied, as these can cause areas of too much pressure or irritation. This can be achieved by wearing a pair of household rubber gloves whilst putting your garment on.

#### **What to do if you have difficulties putting on your garment**

You may have been provided with an aid to help you apply/ remove your garment. If you are struggling to apply/remove your garment, please contact the Lymphoedema Service for more advice.

## **Step-by-step instructions for applying your compression garment:**

### **1. Wash your hands**

Clean hands are essential for preventing infection and maintaining hygiene.

### **2. Prepare the garment**

Turn the garment inside out, making sure there are no wrinkles.

### **3. Position yourself comfortably**

Sit down or stand in a comfortable position with your affected limb raised. This helps reduce swelling before applying the garment.

### **4. Start from the bottom**

Begin at the toes or the fingertips, and slowly roll or pull the garment up, making sure it's not twisted.

### **5. Ensure proper fit**

The garment should fit snugly but should not feel too tight. It should provide consistent pressure, but not cause pain or discomfort.

### **6. Check for wrinkles**

Smooth out any wrinkles in the garment to ensure even compression across the limb.

### **7. Wear regularly**

For maximum effectiveness, wear the compression garment as advised by your lymphoedema practitioner, typically during the day and/or night. Not wearing the garment as directed can reduce its effectiveness.

Compression garments should never be folded back at the top or bottom. For example, at the foot piece or handpiece, as this can cause too much pressure at these places, potentially damaging the skin, like how a tightly wrapped elastic band can cut into the skin.

Proper care and regular use of compression garments are crucial for their effectiveness.

## Here are some tips to help you get the best results from your compression garment:

- **Take breaks when needed:** If the garment causes discomfort, check that it's properly fitted. Take breaks if it is causing discomfort but try to keep the garment on as much as possible. If the discomfort continues remove your compression garment and seek advice from the Lymphoedema Service.
- **Keep garments clean:** It is recommended that garments should be washed daily in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Consult your lymphoedema practitioner:** If you notice any discomfort, change in skin condition, or if the garment feels too tight, contact the Lymphoedema Service for advice. If out of hours or on a weekend, contact your GP or telephone 111 for advice.

## Garments should be replaced every six months, or when:

- They begin to lose their elasticity or support
- They develop holes or ladders
- They become too tight or too loose
- Your oedema has increased or decreased, and your garment no longer fits correctly

## Getting additional/ replacement garments

Most compression garments are available on prescription from your GP. If you have any concerns or queries about your compression garments, please contact your GP for advice. Some compression garments are only available from the Lymphoedema Service. If this is the case, your lymphoedema practitioner will explain to you how you request additional garments.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR GARMENT

Please read carefully and follow these instructions.

### AMBER ALERT

Take off your garment immediately and call **111** for urgent advice if you notice:

- **Redness or rash**, increased heat, tenderness, or more swelling in your arm or leg. This could be **cellulitis**, an infection of the skin that may need antibiotics. (Refer to the “Skin Care and Cellulitis” leaflet for more details.)

**Take off your garment and contact your lymphoedema clinic (during working hours), your GP, or 111 (if out of hours) if you notice:**

- **Skin damage or discoloration.** This might mean your garment wasn't put on properly or doesn't fit correctly because your swelling has increased.
- **Pain, pins and needles or numbness.** This might mean your swelling isn't under control, and your garment has become too

### RED ALERT

Take off your garment immediately and get **URGENT MEDICAL CARE** if you notice:

- **Sudden or worsening pain and swelling** in your arm or leg. This could be **DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis)**, a blood clot in a deep vein. DVT can be dangerous, so it's important to act quickly.

**Symptoms of DVT include:**

- Unexplained pain or tenderness in your leg
- Swelling in one limb (noticeably larger than the other)
- Warmth or redness in the swollen area
- Rare but serious symptoms include: Difficulty breathing or chest pain

### Additional resources

Contact your lymphoedema practitioner for further guidance on garment application or visit [www.stoswaldsuk.org/who-we-care-for/care-for-adults/lymphoedema-service](http://www.stoswaldsuk.org/who-we-care-for/care-for-adults/lymphoedema-service) for more information and tips.

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This leaflet is available in a range of formats.  
Please ask a member of our team if you require  
a different format. **Thank you**

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We are a registered charity and rely on voluntary donations  
and legacies to enable us to care for patients and families.



**St Oswald's  
Hospice**

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