



## Improving Lymphoedema through Lymphatic Venous Anastomosis (LVA) Super Microsurgery

### What is LVA?

LVA is a super microsurgical technique whereby a damaged lymphatic vessel is connected to a small vein. This allows the lymph fluid to drain directly into the blood stream reducing swelling in the tissues. The surgery has reported:-

- An improvement in swelling so do not need to wear garments for as long or at all
- A reduction in symptoms such as pain and heaviness
- Reduced episodes of Cellulitis

Should you meet the criteria listed below, you will be invited to a screening clinic where a scan will be performed to identify whether your lymphatics are suitable for surgery. The surgery will be a day case lasting three to four hours. You normally attend mid-morning and are home early evening.

### What are the criteria for consideration for LVA screening?

- A diagnosis of Lymphoedema in your arms or legs
- Mild to moderate swelling with a maximum excess of 20% compared to the opposite side
- Your skin must be normal - no creases or folds from the Lymphoedema
- Tissues must be soft (no firmness), and have no wounds or ulcers
- A BMI (Body Mass Index) equal to or lower than 30kg/m<sup>2</sup>
- No active cancer disease
- You must be able to self-manage your Lymphoedema including wearing your compression garment, skin care, exercising and self-massage
- Past medical history to include at least two Cellulitis episodes which required antibiotics
- No active fungal infections

Precaution: If you have an allergy to Iodine, please let your therapist know as your case will need to be discussed with the consultant.

You will not be eligible for LVA screening if you:

- Have untreated fungal infections
- Have a BMI over 31kg/m<sup>2</sup>
- Have kidney problems or liver disease
- Have venous hypertension i.e. varicose veins, spider veins, reddening of the feet when standing up
- Have blood in your urine
- Are pregnant
- Are a Smoker
- Have had a previous anaphylaxis shock reaction to a dye

Follow the link or QR code to view a short video about the scan and LVA surgery:

[www.medic.video/w-lymph-lva](http://www.medic.video/w-lymph-lva)



## How do I know if I am suitable for LVA screening?

Your Lymphoedema therapist will identify if you are suitable to be screened for LVA surgery. If you meet the criteria then you will be invited to attend an assessment with the National Lymphoedema Therapists. Your breast care nurse, gynaecological nurse or urology nurse may also be able to refer you.

## What happens at the LVA screening?

This is where we will scan your superficial lymphatics by injecting an iodine dye into the skin between the web space of your fingers or your toes in both limbs. Your limbs will then be scanned using a hand held device which immediately shows how your lymph vessels are working. The image is shown on a computer screen as the dye moves up your limbs. If we identify suitable lymphatic channels that are clearly defined and end abruptly in an area of swelling, then you may be a good candidate for surgery. It is important that the flow of lymph reaches certain points within your limb at set times. This will be explained to you further during the scan process.

## Do the injections hurt?

Like all injections there is some discomfort when the needle first enters the skin and the dye is inserted. The discomfort only lasts for a few minutes though and should not cause any long lasting pain. You may experience some tenderness around the injection, site bruising, temporary green staining of the skin or brief erythema (redness) at the injection site.

## How long will I have to attend for the LVA screening?

You will be assessed and asked some questions about your health and Lymphoedema. The injection and scanning usually takes around an hour in total. You will be asked to do some exercises during the session to help the lymph flow.

## What happens after the LVA screening?

Your scanned images will be saved and will be discussed with the consultant surgeon in a multi-disciplinary team. You, your therapist and GP will be sent a copy of the report with the results of your suitability for surgery.

## What happens if I am not suitable for surgery?

Your Lymphoedema therapist will continue to support and help you manage your Lymphoedema. The scan may identify how your Lymphoedema management could be further enhanced and this will also be included in the report.

## How long will I have to wait for the LVA scanning and then surgery?

On receipt of the referral from your Lymphoedema therapist you will be assessed for scanning within 8 weeks. If you are suitable for surgery then that will take place within 18 weeks of your scan. Thus, the whole process in normal circumstances should take a maximum of 26 weeks.

## If I have the LVA surgery how soon will I see any benefit?

Most patients will notice an improvement within the first 18 months, although some patients say benefits occurred up to three years after surgery.

## Will my Lymphoedema get worse if I have LVA surgery?

No, that is very unlikely. As with all surgery and local anaesthetic, there are some risks which the consultant will discuss with you prior to surgery to allow you to make an informed choice.

**If you would like to discuss LVA in more detail, please contact your Lymphoedema Therapist or the National Lymphoedema Specialists on 01639 862767. An answer phone service is available for you to leave a message, so that we can get back to you if you can't get through in the first instance.**