



Multi-Layer Lymphoedema Bandaging (MLLB)

As part of your treatment with the Lymphoedema Service, you may need an intensive course of multi-layer Lymphoedema Bandaging (MLLB) to compliment wearing the compression garments.

What is MLLB?

MLLB involves applying different layers including a liner, padding and bandages, to the areas affected by lymphoedema, to reduce, reshape or manage uncontrolled swelling. Your Lymphoedema therapist will discuss with you the type of bandaging that is best for you and the timescale it will entail, together you can then agree a plan. MLLB will be performed for either 5 days (Monday to Friday) or 2-3 days (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) a week over two to three weeks. This is dependent on what is required and the treatment can be extended if needed. Each appointment will usually be around 45 minutes to one hour.

How does MLLB Work?

The bandages create a semi-rigid support to your swollen area. As your muscles work, they push against the bandage, causing a massage effect on your skin and tissues. This improves lymphatic drainage and blood flow that in turn reduces the swelling. The bandages can also soften any firm tissues, improve skin conditions, and help wounds to heal. For effective treatment, the bandages must be worn day and night for the agreed duration of treatment.

What happens after MLLB?

After your MLLB has finished, you will be measured and fitted with the most appropriate garment for your limb. This may be a higher class of compression or you may be asked to put two garments on at the same time. The extra garments are important as this is the time when the swelling can come back. It is important for garments to be worn for 23 hours a day, removing once to check the skin, wash and moisturise before reapplying clean garments. This is usually for around a month after bandaging has finished.

What are the Benefits of MLLB?

- It reduces the size and weight of the swollen limb
- It improves the shape of the limb for better fitting of compression garments
- It improves movement, function and comfort of the swollen limb
- It softens firm, thickened, and hardened skin and tissues
- It helps chronic skin inflammation
- It reduces and manages leaking fluid from limbs (Lymphorrhoea)
- It promotes the healing of wounds
- It reduces the risk of Cellulitis

What can be expected during a course of MLLB?

First day of treatment:

- Your limb(s) will be measured and you will be weighed
- Photographs of your limb(s) may be taken with your consent
- MLLB applied, and the Lymphoedema Therapist will provide you with some exercises to do

Following all treatment sessions:

- Bandages will be removed
- You will be assisted to wash/clean and moisturise your limb(s)
- MLLB reapplied

Final treatment session:

- Bandage removed
- Limb(s) will be re-measured and you will be weighed
- Photos may be taken
- Compression garment will be fitted

Initially when the bandages are applied, you may feel that your movement is restricted. This is normal and it is important that you continue to move and exercise as much as possible. The first night is often the most challenging as you will not be used to the bandages. It does get easier during the course of treatment. As the bandages may be bulky, you may need to consider your working arrangements and driving. Remember, as the swelling reduces, the bandages will loosen. Thus, the more you move and use your limb, the more effective the treatment will be.

What else can be done to help the treatment work?

- Move your limb and body as much as possible
- Continue with your normal activities
- Go for a walk as often as possible
- If your therapist has shown you how to perform Simple Lymphatic Drainage (SLD), it is important that you continue with this during your course of MLLB
- Continue to drink plenty of water to flush your lymphatic system
- Aim to spend at least 8 hours sleeping or resting by lying in a bed
- If you have been given specific exercises, these should be done as often as advised
- If you are sitting for long periods of time, it is important to stand and move about regularly to help the muscle pump move the fluid

What happens if...?

Most people with lymphoedema have no problems with MLLB. However, some can experience discomfort from the bandages, pins and needles sensation, or discolouration of the toes or fingers. If these problems occur, the following steps should be followed:

- Move your limb and perform the exercises as shown
- Take some pain killers that you are used to taking
- If after taking pain killers your limb is still hurting, you may remove the top layer of bandage and continue to exercise as this will loosen the bandages further
- Should you have no relief from your symptoms, then remove all the bandages and put on your compression garment. Contact the Lymphoedema Service as soon as possible for further advice

Some people experience itching. Try moving the limb by doing your exercises, tapping the area and if necessary, take an anti-histamine tablet. Report this problem to your therapist.

Very rarely- you may develop difficulties with shortness of breath (due to large amounts of fluid being returned to your general circulation suddenly), remove the bandages, and contact your Lymphoedema Clinic, G.P. or the G.P. Out of Hours Service immediately.

Useful Tips

- If you had a prescription for your bandages, it is very important that you bring your bandages with you to your first appointment
- If you are having bandaging to your leg you may not be able to wear your own footwear, your clinic will be able to provide bandaging shoes
- Bring any prescribed wound dressings and creams that you are currently using
- Remember to wear loose fitting clothes to accommodate the bandages
- Report any signs of infection / Cellulitis immediately to your therapist or GP
- Organise your transport arrangements in advance
- Inform the clinic of any planned holidays or commitments in advance
- Avoid podiatry appointments during your course of MLLB

Patient Story

John has suffered with swollen legs for the last 5 years and recently his legs have started leaking lymph fluid. He first noticed that his ankles were swollen after having an episode of Cellulitis. He had been diagnosed with a fungal infection in between his toes and had forgotten to apply the antifungal cream, which was the reason for his repeated Cellulitis. He found getting shoes to fit a massive problem and therefore his mobility and social life had reduced. He spent most of his time sitting in a chair watching the TV, and his weight increased by 3 stone over the last few years.

After being referred to the Lymphoedema Clinic, John and his therapist worked on a joint treatment plan that included daily washing and drying of skin, applying cream, including his antifungal cream. As John had experienced repeated Cellulitis, his therapist arranged a long-term prescription of prophylactic antibiotics from his GP. The therapist arranged two weeks of MLLB to stop the leaking. He was prescribed temporary bandaging shoes, was encouraged to move his legs whilst sitting in the chair and to start walking daily.

This extra activity, together with a healthy eating plan, enabled John to lose a stone in weight over the next 3 months. The leaking legs stopped after bandaging and he was able to once again wear his own shoes and is back walking daily. To maintain this improvement, compression garments were prescribed and he wears them every day.

Follow the link or QR code below for videos made by people who have lymphoedema. Open your camera on your mobile device and press link.

Follow the link or QR code to view a short video: www.medic.video/w-lymph

