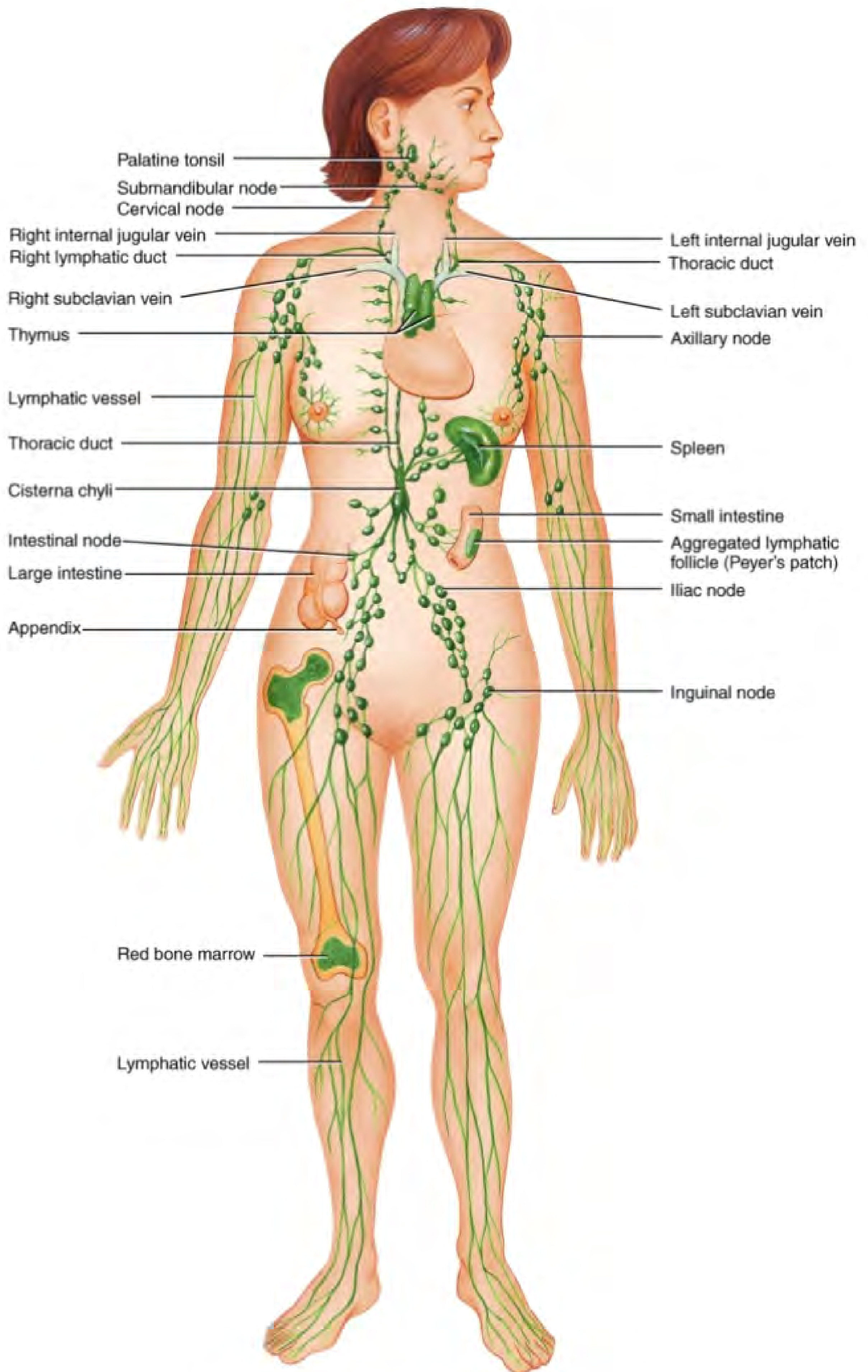


# Lymphoedema

INFORMATION BOOKLET





(a) Anterior view of principal components of lymphatic system

# What is lymphoedema?

Lymphoedema is an abnormal accumulation of high protein fluid in the body's tissue caused by a malfunctioning of the lymphatic system. It is characterized by; changes in skin and tissue texture, swelling, and chronic low level inflammation.

Lymphoedema can be primary (hereditary) or secondary (acquired from damage to the lymphatic system).

Secondary Lymphoedema can have a number of causes, including;

- Cancer treatments such as radiation and the removal of lymph nodes
- Trauma to the body
- Obesity
- Lipoedema
- Repeated bouts of local infection
- Insect bites
- Bacteria

Lymphoedema patients become much more susceptible to infections such as erysipelas, cellulitis and lymphangitis.





# How do we manage it?

There is no cure for lymphoedema but symptoms can be managed using Decongestive Lymphatic Therapy (DLT).

DLT consist of four components;

- Skin care
- Light massage know as manual lymphatic drainage (MLD)
- Compression (garments multi-layer compression bandaging)
- Exercises

Each component is equally important to boost lymphatic flow, reduction of swelling and preventing infections. For best results and to ensure your health and safety, MLD by a trained lymphoedema therapist is required once a week.

Self-treatment including massage and exercises (as shown by your therapist) is required daily. These are specific to the individual.

If lymphoedema swelling is increasing speak to your therapist about multi-layer compression bandages for fast reduction and new pair of compression garments





# What to expect

Over the years of suffering from lymphoedema you may notice fluctuation of your swelling, this is normal.

Lymphoedema may fluctuate due to climate, medication, stress, exercise, environment, altitude and much more. Many lymphoedema sufferers experience discomfort and pain to the affected limb after exercise.

Swelling will increase during aeroplane flights, a CCL2 or stronger compression garment must be worn. Flying with lymphoedema is uncomfortable but if correct care is practiced there is little to be concerned about. Lymphoedema has been known to suddenly increase due to insect bites even as minor as mosquitos or ants, therefore is it important to avoid these bites.

Patients are recommended to wear the appropriate compression garments daily, if this is not possible, wear them as often as you can while at home.

**The more compliant you are with compression the healthier your lymphoedema will be.**





# *What happens if untreated?*

If untreated, a lymphoedema patient are putting their body at risk of developing serious infection and irreversible swelling, discoloration and hardening of the skin.

When swelling increases this is also putting stress and heaviness to the joints and of the body and may cause further injury.

## *What to look out for?*

Unexplained changes to the skin of the affect limb such as increase in temperature, redness and itchiness may be a sign a infection; book an appointment with your doctor.

Swelling at either end of your garment (eg, toes and fingers or thigh and upper arm) could be a sign of a wrongly fitted garment, consult you therapist to discuss solutions as this may worsen lymphoedema.



# Care Tips

Here are some basic guide lines to follow. To ensure your comfort;

- Moisturise regularly with a non-perfumed moisturising cream. Reduce the use of heavy 'body butters' and oily substances or creams to the skin. Apply moisturiser and allow enough time for it to dry before applying garments, as moisture can cause difficulty when applying the garment, or moisturise at night after the garment is removed
- Consider soap free body/hand wash to avoid drying out your skin.
- Clean any scratches or cuts immediately using an antiseptic solution, use an antibacterial cream and cover the area with a clean, dry plaster.' (Ref [www.canceraustralia.com.au](http://www.canceraustralia.com.au))



- Avoid excessive heat. During summer and hot days try to stay in cool shady places or in aircon, avoid having hot showers, baths, spa ext. (warm exercise pool 35c or below expectable) Try to wear dish washing gloves while washing in high temperatures.
- Avoid Sunburn. Be prepared with sunscreen for all outdoor activities and please note you CAN burn through compression garments.
- Avoid insect bites. While enjoying outdoors, beach activities or camping adventures ensure you have insect repellent on to lower the risk bites from midges, mosquitoes ext.



# Care Tips Continued

- Avoid heavy exercise routines. A specific exercise plan can be organised by a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist. If you wish to participate in extensive exercises, speak to your therapist first to ensure your safety (this may include heavy lifting in the work place or around the home).
- While traveling on aircrafts or in high altitude locations compression **MUST** be worn. Ensure your garment is the appropriate class and within date.
- Avoid applying ice or **COLD** water to treat your lymphoedema if you are feeling hot or experience further swelling. For comfort you may soak the affect limb under room temperature/**COOL** running water from a tap. Your compression garments are water proof, you may also find spraying the garment with cool water from a spray bottle effective in reducing temperature
- Avoid poorly fitted or tight fitted clothing that 'cuts' into the skin.





# Upper/Lower Limb Lymphoedemas

## Lower Limb

- Try to wear closed in shoes while out doors to avoid cuts. Check feet regularly for infections or tinea and treat promptly.
- Take care when cutting toenails; prevent ingrown toe nails. Use clean scissors or clippers

## Upper Limb

- Ensure nail files and clippers are clean before use, replace regularly
- **Females:** Avoid wearing bras when possible eg around the house. Ensure bra have been fitted correctly and not 'cutting' into the skin.
- Protective ware must be worn while gardening



### **STOP USE OF COMPRESSION AND LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE IF INFECTION IS PRESENT**

**If you suspect infection due to a sudden swelling, redness or heat to the affected limb arrange an appointment with your doctor immediately.**

**Drug treatments: Diuretics and drugs containing benzopyrones or bioflavonoids are not effective for the treatment of lymphoedema.**

**Caloundra**  
**Shop 27 Centrepoint Plaza**  
**Cnr Leeding Tce & Minchinton St**  
**Ph: (07) 5438 9111**

.....

**Buderim**  
**Shop 4C**  
**72 Burnett Street**  
**Ph: (07) 5408 0158**

.....

**Kawana**  
**Suit 3**  
**Cnr Nicklin Way & Main Drive**  
**Ph: (07) 5314 1150**

Melissa Bride  
Dip Remedial/ Sports Massage  
Oncology Massage Level 2 Lymphatic Therapy



**PHYSIO**  
Professionals