

**Swedish massage**.... deep pressures used working into muscles; could damage micro lymphatics and be painful.

**Acupuncture:** based on body's energy channels (meridians): uses needles : infection risk , avoid on affected quadrant .

**Moxibustion;** acupuncture with needles and heat source :infection risk, increased swelling in lymphoedema.

**Acupressure:** as above, uses deep thumb pressures instead of needles. Avoid on affected side.

**Cupping:** Heated glass 'cups' applied to skin to increase surface blood flow; damage to microlymphatics and infection risk.

**Hot Stone Therapy:** Uses heated stones/shells and aromatherapy oils to massage deep tissues - risk of increased swelling in lymphoedema.

Remember this is not a comprehensive list and is intended to guide you in making safe informed choices about complementary therapy.

The BEST treatment for your lymphoedema is that provided by your Lymphoedema Practitioner, because it is based on evidence and guided by International Guidelines.

HOWEVER, Complementary Therapies can promote relaxation, boost self esteem and ease some of the symptoms of heaviness and discomfort of lymphoedema.

USE this advice and ACT FIRST tips to safely choose a treatment and a therapist that suits you, your needs AND your lymphoedema.

## ACT FIRST

Use "ACT FIRST" every time you visit a new Therapist.

**A**sk to see certificates

**C**heck credentials

**T**ell all your medical history

**F**eedback if pressure too heavy

**I**nsist unscented oils/creams only on affected quadrant.

**R**eally light effleurage (stroking) only, on affected quadrant

**S**Top treatment if not happy.

## ENJOY

# Complementary Therapy and Lymphoedema



**-How to make an  
informed choice**

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Although lymphoedema should be managed by a specially trained Lymphoedema Therapist, many people find that certain Complementary Therapies help to ease symptoms, alleviate stress and aid relaxation.

Lymphoedema may be a contra- indication for some alternative/complementary therapies and may even be made worse by others.

Not all therapists have sufficient/appropriate knowledge about Lymphoedema.

This *FIRST LYMPHCARE GUIDE* may help you make safe choices about the suitability of other therapies and your Lymphoedema.

ALWAYS ask your Lymphoedema Therapist's advice.

### **Choosing a Therapist**

Be prepared to ask the following questions:

*Can you see their qualifications,?*

*What do their professional Initials mean?*

*Are they insured.? can you see the*

*Certificate?*

*Have they had additional lymphoedema training ?*

*Are there any contra-indications*

BEFORE treating you the therapist *should* ask you about your health , treatments you have had and medications you are receiving. They should explain what the therapy is, how it will

be performed, side effects and after care advice and costs.

*You are allowing somebody to treat your body... NEVER be afraid to ask questions and NEVER be afraid to decline/stop treatment if you are not happy with any aspect of it.*

### **Which Therapies Can I Try?**

This guide focuses on some of the more popular therapies in the UK.

**M.L.D.....** Manual Lymphatic Drainage massage. Light , two directional, skin stretch technique without oils/creams, by a practitioner trained to Advanced Level for Lymphoedema. (: Leduc, Casley-Smith, Vodder, Foeldii).

**Body /Therapeutic Massage.....** using plain oil/cream... and only LIGHT EFFLEURAGE to affected quadrant/avoiding affected area.

**Bowen Therapy....** gentle, manipulative, relaxing.... avoid deep moves on lymphoedematous areas.

**Reflexology....** firm pressures on points on the feet, hands and earlobes. Use instead of massage over lymphoedema. Lighter pressures if working on oedematous hands/feet.

**Cranio-sacral Osteopathy... very light spinal manipulation,** can be very relaxing.

**Reiki....** light touch/hands off , relaxing. .. no physical pressure/manipulation used.

**Indian Head Massage...** Westernised sequence of massage performed seated/lying. Uses oils/creams and deep pressures to upper back, shoulders, neck ,head face. Can be adapted by skilled practitioner to use light pressure only . Avoid if facial oedema and no essential oils where lymphoedema.

**Facial massage/facials/facial saunas.....** avoid if you have facial oedema/sinusitis.

### **Which Therapies Should I Avoid?**

Again this guide only considers the most commonly available treatments.

**Shiatsu...** uses deep thumb pressures and strenuous manipulations of joints and tissues; may damage micro lymphatics and be painful.

**Osteopathy/Chiropractic...** used for spinal/postural problems. Sometimes uses powerful manipulations and positioning to `re-align' the spine. Some moves may compromise lymphoedematous areas.

**Aromatherapy Massage** with Essential oils... avoid on lymphoedematous areas; may cause skin reactions and damage hosiery.

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