

## Range of treatments available through KLC

Generally, there are four components of care that will be recommended for people with mild to moderate swelling of their limbs:

- **Skin Care** to keep the skin and tissues in good condition and to prevent/reduce the risk of infection
- **External Support/Compression** in the form of elastic compression garments to help prevent the swelling from building up in the limb
- **A programme of exercise and movement** to try and maximise lymph drainage without over exertion (this would cause the swelling to worsen).
- **Simple Lymphatic Drainage (SLD)** – a gentle massage technique that is based on the principles of Manual Lymphatic Drainage (see below). It involves the use of simple hand movements to try and move the swelling out of the affected area. It is designed to be carried out by patients themselves – or their relatives or carers.

Reassessment and monitoring of progress is essential to ensure good results – as is, a high level of motivation and compliance by the patient themselves.

For people with a more severe swelling, additional treatments may be recommended within a more intensive treatment programme called Decongestive Lymphatic Therapy (DLT) or Combined Decongestive Therapy (CDT). This intensive treatment may last for a period of 2 – 4 weeks and combines a package of treatments. These may include some of the above, plus one or more of the following:

- **Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD)** – a specialised form of massage carried out by a trained therapist to move the skin in specific directions **based** on the underlying anatomy and physiology of the lymphatic system.
- **Lymphoedema Bandaging** – a system of specific bandages provides a rigid casing for the muscles to work against which in turn helps to improve the shape and size of severe swelling.
- **Intermittent Sequential Pneumatic Compression Therapy** – despite this type of therapy being available for numerous years, there is no real proof of effectiveness. Caution should be taken when using these machines – and should only be used under the supervision of a lymphoedema practitioner.
- **Kinesio Taping** – is a relatively new treatment that has shown very promising results. It is a taping system that has been successfully used in physiotherapy and sporting injuries and involves the application of a special supportive tape that allows the drainage of fluid from areas of congestion to areas where it can drain away more freely
- **Deep Oscillation Treatment using the Hivamat 200.** This very gentle therapy is used in conjunction with MLD and is very helpful to reduce pain swelling and fibrosis

- **Low Level Light Laser Therapy** – although licensed in the UK, this form of treatment is not commonly used. However, this undervalued and extremely safe method of laser treatment can be used widely to help heal wounds, ease pain/discomfort and can significantly help reduce swelling/oedema. It is used extensively in the US and Australia – especially for patients suffering from breast cancer related lymphoedema who have a lot of trunkal fibrosis (hardening of the tissues) after radiotherapy.
- **Drug Therapy** – although research is still ongoing, drug therapy for pure lymphoedema is very limited. However, there are certain situations when some drugs will be of benefit – KLC staff will be able to advise you.