

Issue 1
Winter 2012

Lymph-notes

Keeping you in the loop about
St Oswald's Lymphoedema Service

Hello and welcome...

To the first ever edition of Lymph-notes. We now have over 1400 Lymphoedema patients at St Oswald's and it's important to us to keep **you all** in the loop and up to date with what's going on. We'll be producing this newsletter four times each year and will be giving you hints and tips, directing you to useful forums and websites and providing you with details of service developments.

If, after reading this edition you'd like to receive future issues please let us know. To save print and postage costs we'd prefer to email an electronic version out to you (if possible) and hard copies will be available to pick up in our Outpatient Suite. If you'd like to receive Lymph-notes via email please drop us an email at aimeeanderson@stoswaldsuk.org You'll also be able to download editions from our website.

Patient education programme

We rolled out our first Patient Education Programme in September and so far the feedback has been extremely positive. The programme is a pilot and is ran by our Keyworkers. Each programme runs for six weeks and equips the participants with the knowledge and skills to be able to self-manage their condition. Being able to manage your own condition can improve wellbeing, increase independence and improve quality of life. We hope those of you who took part in September are now well on your way to becoming 'expert-patients'!

The next lot of sessions are due to take place soon. If you're a new patient and you're suitable for the programme, the Lymphoedema Team will be in contact with you.

Winter weight-watch

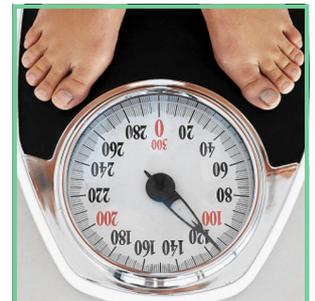
As the days get darker and shorter, many of our waistbands start to get wider! Winter weight gain can be a problem for many people and this is down to three main reasons: lack of physical activity, comfort eating and over-indulging at Christmas time.

Cold weather and shorter days make it harder to exercise outdoors, so it's easy not to do any exercise over the Winter months. If you're not outside as much, there's more time and temptation to reach into the kitchen cupboard for high-calorie sweet snacks, such as biscuits and cakes. However, a small weight gain for most may just mean they have to go up a dress-size, but for people with Lymphoedema it can result in much more.

Just doing a little exercise regularly can have a positive impact on your limb size, as well as helping with weight management, as obesity can lead, and worsen pre-existing Lymphoedema. With exercise you should notice a difference in how your limb looks, feels and moves. Your quality of life and feelings of well-being may also improve as well as your cardio-vascular fitness. This can also help to lower levels of stress.

Remember that any exercise programme should be introduced gradually to avoid sprain or strain and follow the below tips to make it as easy as possible for you:

- bandages and compression garments should be kept on when exercising
- always include a warm up and cool down
- use your common sense and work up to strenuous exercise
- cool limbs down in water 20 minutes after exercise to help prevent oedema formation
- monitor your limb closely and have rest periods between sessions



If you have any queries about exercise speak to a member of the team.

You said...we did

Earlier in the year we held Focus Groups for our Lymphoedema Patients, as well as introduced a new questionnaire. Thanks for your suggestions and here's what we've implemented:

- we've launched our Patient Education Programme (as mentioned on the front page)
- we now have tailored information for patients that attend our clinics at Shiremoor. This outlines everything you need to know about being treated at the Shiremoor Resource Centre.
- we've recently devised a Patient Information Booklet for new Lymphoedema patients. This outlines what will happen at a first appointment, how to find us, who's who, data protection and more.
- we've launched Lymph-notes!

Thanks again for your time and please watch this space for further developments and changes taking place as a result of your feedback. You can also have your say at anytime via patientfeedback@stoswaldsuk.org

Caring for your skin

Dry skin is often worse during the Winter when environmental humidity is low. A good skincare regime is even more important during the cold months and will help to optimise your skin condition. Skincare is essential because it can prevent infection (which would overload an already comprised lymphatic system), improve skin condition and prevent skin changes occurring.

As you'll be aware the team are always encouraging good skincare and below is just a small reminder of what you should be doing each day:

- wash carefully, especially in skin folds and between toes or fingers
- pat dry - don't rub
- moisturise skin at night, even if your skin doesn't look dry
- check for signs of infection (cellulitis) i.e. redness/rash, heat, increased pain, increased swelling, flu like symptoms.



Web wise...

We've recently been looking into useful websites, forums and other forms of social media relevant to Lymphoedema patients. There's quite a lot out there where you can access support, advice and chat to other people with Lymphoedema. Here's a small selection that you may find useful:

Facebook - Groups include 'Lymphoedema is part of who I am' and the 'Lymphoedema Support Network'. We also have our own St Oswald's Hospice Facebook page so please 'like' us.

Twitter - The Lymphoedema Support Network are now on Twitter, follow them at @lymphsupport. Follow us: @stoswaldsuk.

Health Unlocked, Lymphoedema Support Network - www.lsn.healthunlocked.com - Connect with others living with Lymphoedema and the Lymphoedema Support Network team. Find answers to health questions from other patients, health issues and debates relevant to you and tools to help you make choices that are right for you. Ask other people with Lymphoedema questions, anything from where to buy wide wellies to issues around pain.

LymTeen - help and support for teenagers living with Lymphoedema. Find help and support, advice on fashion and skincare and there's also the opportunity to ask a question.

If there's any others that you'd like us to share with other patients please let us know.

Northern Lymphoedema Support Group (NLSG)

Please remember that the NLSG hold their meetings at St Oswald's. The next meeting takes place on **16th March 2013**. If you'd like to come along or find out more please contact Monica Burns, Secretary on 0191 259 5793.

Seasonal opening times

We will be open as usual over the festive period with the exception of Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day (Bank Holidays).

