



St Oswald's
Hospice

Advice about
skin care & cellulitis

St Oswald's Hospice
Lymphoedema Service

Quality time for everyone

The Lymphoedema Service at St Oswald's aims to offer a service to individuals with lymphoedema, whatever the cause. We help patients to understand their condition and offer advice on how they can adapt everyday activities in order to successfully control their lymphoedema.

This leaflet aims to give you clear information about skincare, including:

- General tips you should follow to improve skincare
- Information about cellulitis, signs to look out for and treatment
- Advice about skin care when on holiday

Skincare is essential for lymphoedema patients because it can prevent infection (which would overload an already compromised lymphatic system), improve skin condition and prevent skin changes occurring.

What can I do each day to improve my skin care?

- 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

People with lymphoedema are particularly susceptible to cellulitis. Below is some information about what to look for and what to do if you develop cellulitis.

What is cellulitis?

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin and tissues caused by a specific bacteria. People with lymphoedema are more at risk of developing cellulitis. This is because 'lymph'fluid is rich in protein which attracts certain bacteria which the lymphatic system isn't able to fight off. Bacteria can enter the body through different routes but often it is through breaks in the skin or triggered by fungal infections.

What are the signs and symptoms of cellulitis?

- A rash or redness to the skin on the swollen limb
- Swollen limb feels hot to touch
- Sudden increase in swelling
- Pain in the swollen limb
- Flu-like symptoms i.e. aches and pains, high temperature, fever, nausea and vomiting

What should I do if I notice any of these signs?

- Contact your GP immediately for antibiotics
- Remove your garment
- Continue to carry out your skin care
- Rest and elevate your affected limb
- Stop exercises / massage
- Drink plenty of water
- Take pain killers if needed.
- If you notice your cellulitis is responding after 48 hours and your swelling is more comfortable please re-start wearing your compression garment. You may find wearing an older garment more comfortable initially.



Advice for going on holiday

Our patients often tell us that they worry about going on holiday, but with a little thought and preparation before travelling, there is no reason why you should not have a stress free, relaxing time. The below tips have been provided as a guide to help if you go on holiday:

- Avoid sunburn – wear a high factor good quality sun cream
- Avoid insect bites
- Don't overdo sports – exercise at the coolest part of the day
- Beware of fungal infections
- Wear protective footwear on the beach and in the sea
- Use a good moisturiser – be diligent with skin care
- Keep your limb cool – wet your garment as evaporation will cool the limb.
- Keep a spare garment in the fridge, in a plastic bag.
- Wear your compression garments/wraps when travelling to and from holidays; however you travel.
- Try and plan regular stops if in a car/bus to take a walk and exercise. If on a plane carry out regular foot and leg exercised or have a walk up and down the plane.
- Try and get a seat with plenty of leg space.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Wear high factor sun cream in hot weather and keep the affected limb covered on the beach. You can still get sunburnt whilst wearing a compression garment.
- Apply insect repellent to protect yourself against bites and consider if you need to take antihistamine to stop irritation.

For more information about cellulitis
please visit www.lymphoedema.org

This leaflet is available in a range of formats.
Please ask a member of our team if you require
a different format. **Thank you**

We are a registered charity and rely on voluntary donations
and legacies to enable us to care for patients and families.



**St Oswald's
Hospice**

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