

10 Things LE



To Know About Compression Garments for Lymphedema

- 1. Compression garments.** Compression garments are essential to reduce and maintain the reduction in swelling in affected areas of the body, such as arms, legs, groin, trunk, neck, or head. Compression garments can be purchased over the counter, online, at healthcare facilities, or be custom-made. Well-fitting garments are an important component of effective treatment of LE.
- 2. Finding the best garments.** Your Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) is an excellent source of information about garments, but you can help by exploring options yourself then checking with the CLT how appropriate they are for you. You may find it necessary to try several types of compression garments until you find the best ones for you.
- 3. Paying for compression garments.** Compression garments can be expensive. Currently, Medicare and Medicaid do not cover the cost. You can explore coverage through your private insurance. Ask your insurer for coverage limits and an approved list of vendors. Many vendors (medical supply companies) will help you get garments by working with your insurance company. If insurance coverage is not available, explore a Health Care Federal Savings Account (HCFSAs) or ask family and friends to help with the cost of garments instead of giving you birthday and holiday gifts.
- 4. Garment choices.** Your CLT is the best source of information about compression garments specifically for you. A CLT or fitter knows about quality, types, specific brands, and cost of compression garments and can help you get the best ones for you.
- 5. Putting on and taking off (donning and doffing) garments.** A number of devices such as gloves and donners are available to help put compression garments on and take them off. Donning and doffing compression garments becomes easier with practice. Don't give up!
- 6. Zippered garments.** Some compression garments are available with zippers. Some individuals find garments with zippers easier to use; others find them harder to put on and take off. Ask your CLT or fitter for advice; perhaps there is a sample garment with zippers you can try.
- 7. Layering compression.** Just as too little compression can be ineffective; too much compression can cause problems. Ask your CLT about wearing compression shorts, capris, or leggings over compression stockings. Don't add or remove compression levels without the advice of the CLT.
- 8. Alternatives to multilayered (Short Stretch) bandages.** Your CLT may recommend Velcro closure garments. The cost of these Velcro closure garments may be offset by the convenience and comfort. Some individuals, however, prefer bandaging. Your CLT is the best source of help with what will work for you.
- 9. Arm and hand compression.** A long glove instead of a short glove with a sleeve may work as well for you. It also is possible to get an all-in-one arm sleeve and glove. Your CLT can make suggestions and refer you to the best places to purchase compression garments.
- 10. Lifespan of garments.** Manufacturers suggest the lifespan of their compression garments (usually 4 to 6 months) to ensure the compression integrity. How long your compression garments last is based on daily use and how you care for the garments – it may be longer or shorter than the manufacturer recommends. Check with your CLT or the manufacturer for an estimate of lifespan based on your personal use.



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