

Isle of Wight Lymphoedema Service Referral Guidelines.

Access to the Lymphoedema Service is by written referral only, preferably via email (see referral form). Please note that verbal referrals will not be accepted unless accompanied by a referral form. The service is available to all patients (Palliative and non Palliative) who are registered with an Isle of Wight GP practice.

Definitions

Primary Lymphoedema

Primary lymphoedema is thought to be the result of a congenital abnormality of the lymph conducting system.

Secondary Lymphoedema

Secondary or acquired lymphoedema results from damage to the lymphatic vessels and/or lymph nodes caused by an identifiable process external to the lymphatic system. The causes can be divided into 4 main groups:

1. Cancer related
2. Infection
3. Inflammation
4. Trauma

Referral Criteria

- Referrals are accepted for assessment of patients with suspected primary or secondary lymphoedema
- Referrals are accepted from the patients GP, Medical Consultants or Specialist Nurse, District/Practice Nurses and Podiatrists and Physiotherapists
- Patients are expected to attend the clinic via personal or public transport. Volunteer transport can be arranged via the Lymphoedema Service for patients with transport difficulties, subject to availability. Home visits to genuinely housebound patients can be carried out if necessary
- If the patient has been previously diagnosed with a malignancy, possible recurrence must be excluded prior to referral

Contra-indications

- Patients who have recently been diagnosed with Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
- Patients who have an acute inflammatory infection
- Patients with unstable cardiac or renal failure
- Patients with post-operative swelling within 8 weeks of surgery
- Patients who are currently receiving treatment for ulcers, wounds or have lymphorrhoea (wet/leaking limbs)
- **Please note that in the case of palliative patients, the contraindication of lymphorrhoea can be discussed at the point of referral.**

- All referrals are triaged by the Lymphoedema team to assess eligibility for assessment
- Accepted referrals will be sent an invite letter containing an appointment date and time
- Any referrals not meeting the criteria will be discussed with the referrer

First Assessment

An initial assessment will be undertaken at the patient's first visit to the clinic, including a detailed medical history, swelling history, medication list and physical examination of the affected limb(s) or area. An appropriate plan of care will then be decided upon and discussed with the patient and achievable outcomes/goals identified.

Patients who fit the referral criteria will initially be accepted for assessment to identify if they have problems that can be addressed by the service.

Patients who meet the service criteria for treatment will have a plan of care agreed by the patient and lymphoedema practitioner based on the 4 recognised cornerstones of treatment as appropriate i.e. skin care, exercise, massage/Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) and compression.

The importance of self-management will be emphasised at the first appointment.

Discharge

Discharge from the service back into the Primary Care setting will be discussed with the patient at the appropriate time, once maximum limb reduction has been gained and maintained adequately.

Please Note:

- It is recommended that patients who have oedema/swelling and have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 35+ should have been assessed for weight management programmes prior to referral.
- Patients on active cancer treatment will be offered a modified maintenance treatment until active treatments are completed.
- Long term success will depend upon the patient/carer being able to understand and comply with the recommended treatment.

**The Isle of Wight Lymphoedema Service is located at the
EMH John Cheverton Centre, Halberry Lane, Newport, Isle of Wight. PO30 2ER.
Tel: 01983 529511**