

# Mt Wilga Private Hospital

# Lymphoedema

# Clinic



Mt Wilga Private Hospital, located in Hornsby, has been providing specialised complex lymphoedema therapy for over 25 years. Our service has been internationally recognised as a LE&RN Conservative Care Centre of Excellence in Lymphatic Disease. The only one of its kind in Australia.



## What is lymphoedema?

Lymphoedema is a chronic swelling of a region of one or more regions of the body. It can occur in the limbs, trunk, genitals and the head/neck. It is caused by an excess accumulation of protein rich fluids. This occurs when lymphatic circulation fails to keep up with demand. Lymphoedema is broadly categorised as either “primary” or “secondary”. Primary presentations occur when there is a genetic malformation of the lymphatics. Swelling may be present at birth but can also develop later in life. “Secondary” lymphoedema is due to damage or disruption of lymph nodes or lymphatic vessels and can occur following surgery for cancer (especially following lymph node dissection), skin grafting or orthopaedic surgery. Other causes of secondary lymphoedema include (but are not limited to) DVT, radiotherapy, infection (cellulitis), trauma, dependency and obesity.

## The importance of management

Increases in volume of the limbs/trunk/ genitals can impact on mobility, function, and quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, people with lymphoedema are at increased risk of developing cellulitis. The Australasian Lymphology Association has developed a best practice guideline on the management of cellulitis in lymphoedema.

<https://www.lymphoedema.org.au/about-lymphoedema/consensus-guideline/>

Wounds are a common occurrence in those with lymphoedema and healing can be hindered in the presence of uncontrolled swelling.<sup>2</sup>

Patients who are undertaking lymph node dissection and/or radiotherapy as part of their cancer treatment should be referred to a lymphoedema therapist pre-operatively for baseline measures and to ensure early intervention protocols can be implemented if required. There is growing evidence that early intervention can prevent progression of lymphoedema.<sup>3</sup>

## Principles of management

Lymphoedema cannot be cured, but intervention from an accredited therapist can prevent progression and relieve symptoms. Therapy consists of:

- **Skin care:** aims to optimise skin condition and guard against infection
- **Exercise:** with a focus on muscle pump activity to encourage movement of fluid
- **Compression:** in the form of compression bandaging this works to optimise limb shape and achieve volume reductions. Patients then progress to compression garments to ensure maintenance of the shape and size of the affected area. Compression garments are of a medical grade and improve lymphatic circulation and support.

## How to refer

Patients do not require a GP referral to see a therapist as an outpatient at Mt Wilga. Information regarding previous medical history is always appreciated. Appointments can be made by calling 9847 5345.

Patients wishing to access admitted services at Mt Wilga require assessment with Dr Grace Leong.

Email: [therapybookings.MWP@ramsayhealth.com.au](mailto:therapybookings.MWP@ramsayhealth.com.au)

Referrals should be sent to: [medicalsuites.MWP@ramsayhealth.com.au](mailto:medicalsuites.MWP@ramsayhealth.com.au)

## References:

1. Morgan PA, Franks PJ, Moffatt CJ. Health-related quality of life with lymphoedema: a review of the literature. *Int Wound J.* 2005; 2:47-62
2. Morales-Labarca MF & Ramirez Castro CN. Benefits of inelastic and short-stretch bandages in leg ulcer: a narrative review. *Journal of Wound Management* 2024;25(1):22-30
3. ALA position paper on Early detection of breast cancer-related lymphoedema 2019
4. <https://www.lymphoedema.org.au/about-lymphoedema/position-statements/>
5. GP guide to lymphoedema: <https://www.lymphaustralia.org.au/events/raising-awareness-campaign/gp-guide-to-lymphoedema/>

