

**Lymphatic system manual lymph drainage**

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First up, let’s start off by understanding what Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) actually is. There’s a common misperception of this therapy – even amongst therapists – so it’s important to understand when you are getting MLD and when you are getting a lymphatic massage, and what the differences or benefits are. MLD is a therapy which supports and stimulates the bodies lymphatic system, putting the system under load to get it working harder and more effectively. It has a systematic (whole system) effect – think of it as turning on the vacuum cleaner (turning on the lymphatic system). It’s more effective with results long lasting – for days, not just during the treatment. Lymphatic massage or effleurage is more of a toothpaste effect – you’re just emptying the system, not activating it, so it will refill at a faster rate, therefore bringing shorter or less effective results. So, while both will have immediate results, the overall impact and effectiveness will be quite different. While MLD may be incorporated into a remedial massage treatment, it is not a form of massage. More a technique which can be integrated to support the bodies lymphatic system and healing process. It’s an incredibly gentle treatment which is why it can be used effectively in some acute conditions as well as in lymphedema management. What are the functions of the lymphatic system? The primary role of the lymphatic system is circulation of lymphocytes – immune elements – for protection of the body. It also removes fluid leaked by the capillaries into connective tissue spaces, removes protein and lipid molecules too large to enter blood capillaries, removes waste materials from the tissue and assists in maintaining blood volume. If the lymphatic system is functioning at an optimal rate then the body is clean and healthy and able to support normal immune function and healing. If the lymphatic system is compromised due to injury or illness then Manual Lymphatic Drainage can help the system work more effectively bringing the body back to homeostasis (balance). What symptoms can Manual Lymphatic Drainage treat?
1.Sinusitis – by removing congestion from the affected areas it enables the immune system to function more effectively and support the natural healing process of the body. MLD can treat chronic sinusitis and can have long-lasting effects.
2.Sports injuries (e.g. ACL tear, sprained ankle) – MLD will remove the excess fluid from the tissues (swelling) and expedite the healing process. Inflammation of the area will be reduced, bruising will heal much faster and oxygen will circulate through the tissues more effectively.
3.Bursitis or tendonitis (to include epicondylitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, plantar fasciitis and so on) – MLD will reduce inflammation in the area, enabling oxygen to circulate and the body’s tissues to heal more effectively.
4.Respiratory conditions – especially good for people recovering from bronchitis. A treatment will help to clear congestion in lungs, get the lymph flowing more freely through the area, boost immunity post-illness and support healing.
5.Surgery (orthopaedic or cosmetic) – pre-surgery it will get the lymphatic system firing effectively so it’s ‘ready to go’ and will be able to work more effectively following the surgery. Post-surgery it will reduce swelling, help bruising heal faster and increase the natural healing process. As the pressure is so light it can be used post-surgery with no discomfort. These are just a small selection of some of the conditions MLD can be used to treat. It can also help with traumatic injuries, TMJ, bowel issues such as constipation, frozen shoulder, headaches or migraines, respiratory clearance if you’re giving up smoking, management of swelling in the legs from vein removal and many more… Even if you don’t have a specific issue, the calming effect MLD has on the sympathetic nervous system alongside stimulation of immune function can benefit even the healthiest of people – supporting with stress management and better immunity. If you are suffering from lymphedema you’ll need to be referred to a therapist specialising in lymphedema treatment.Hannah is a Remedial Massage Therapist specialising in lymphatic therapies. She has completed her basic and level 1 studies with the Dr Vodder School – International. If you have any questions or would like to know more about Manual Lymphatic Drainage and how it can benefit you, give the clinic a call and we can arrange a short phone consultation with Hannah prior to your treatment. By Hannah Chapman Remedial Massage Therapist AMT (Association of Massage Therapists) accreditation Health fund rebates available
The Lymphatic system is the body’s garbage disposal, fluid moves around the body and picks up ‘out of place’ cells and either processes them for disposal or returns them to the right location. The lymphatic system can be compromised temporarily, such as swelling with an ankle sprain, and then recover or can be permanently damaged where the lymphatic system can no longer process ‘the garbage’ fast enough. Lymphoedema often occurs from chronic illnesses such as diabetes or as a side effect from cancer treatment. Unfortunately, there is not yet a cure for Lymphoedema but there are continually developing management strategies including compression wear and lymph drainage treatment, which our Senior Physiotherapist Pia Jorgensen is trained and experienced in administering. Compression Wear: Garment Fitting Compression garments for lymphoedema are the most important component of management. These garments must be individually fitted to give you the best possible graded compression to control your symptoms. Garment fitting is a little more of an art than a science and Pia is committed to trying to get every patient the best possible fit. Manual Lymph Drainage Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) is a specialised form of massage used to help stimulate your lymphatic system when it is compromised. Pia is trained in the Dr Vodder method, which aims at stimulating your working lymphatic system, and bypassing compromised sections of the lymph system. These techniques work only temporarily. They help you feel better and reduce the swelling in a limb to fit comfortably into a garment. MLD can also be used for Chronic pain, Fibromyalgia, Autoimmune diseases and may other conditions. Low Level Laser Therapy Low-level laser therapy (LLLT) has been approved by Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in 2009 for the treatment of lymphoedema. Research shows LLLT can help lymphedema in a number of ways: increase range of motion by reducing tightness reduce the volume of the arm break down scar tissue The laser light is believed to increase the flow of lymph, reduces the amount of excess protein and tissue in the fluid, and reduces the ability of scar tissue to “stick” to the underlying healthy tissue. LLLT was introduced as a potential treatment for lymphoedema by Piller and Thelander in 1995. Since that time there have been numerous published clinical studies as well as cell and tissue studies which suggests that LLLT is a potential treatment for lymphatic disorders. LLLT is reported to have beneficial effects on cells and tissues. LLLT has been trialled for the treatment of fibrous scar tissue and has been shown to affect fibroblasts (connective tissue cells). These effects are important both in treating surgical scars associated with postmastectomy lymphoedema (PML) and in treating the brwny oedema that often develops in lymphoedematous limbs (fibrosis). There is also a suggestion that LLLT encourages lymphogenesis (formation of lymphatic vessels from pre-existing ymphatic vessels) and stimulates lymphatic motoricity (lymph movement). Finally, LLLT appears to affect macrophage cells (remove cellular debris) and stimulate the immune system. All of these actions indicate that LLLT could be an appropriate treatment for post-mastectomy lymphoedema. Possible benefits: restoration of lymphatic drainage through the axillary region due to stimulation of new lymphatic pathways restoration of drainage through reduction of fibrosis and scarring of tissues in the axillary region reduction in tissue fluid accumulation through changes in blood flow, either directly via an effect of blood vessels or by neural regulation of vessels in the limb Lymphatic drainage massage is a type of massage therapy that may help to relieve swelling that occurs when medical treatment or poor health causes blockages to the lymphatic system. This is the part of the body that protects us from infection and disease.Certain health conditions - including obesity, inflammation, infection and cancer - can cause lymph fluids to build up, a condition known as lymphedema. Lymphatic drainage massage can help to reduce this by using gentle pressure to move lymph (excess fluid) from your tissues to your lymph nodes.“If you think of your body like a fish tank, the lymphatic system acts like a filtration system,” says Jules Willcocks, founder of Body Ballancer® Systems Ltd (opens in new tab). “If you don’t look after the filtration pipes, it doesn’t matter how many times you fill it up with fresh water, it would quickly get clogged and toxic.”Willcocks says this is because the mechanics that help to keep the water fresh and healthy aren’t working properly. The lymphatic system works in the same way - if you don’t have a fully functioning healthy lymphatic system it will, over time, get clogged with toxins that lead to a number of health concerns.“Here, we’ll dive deeper into how lymphatic massage works, the potential benefits, and a step-by-step guide on how to perform a lymphatic drainage massage yourself. If you’re ready to take self-massage to the next level, our guide to the best massage guns has a great selection too.“The lymphatic system sits alongside the body’s cardiovascular system, quietly helping to look after your health,” explains Willcocks. “The reason it is so important is because it performs three critical functions. It supports your immune system by removing toxins, dead blood cells, pathogens and other waste. It helps your body to absorb fats and fat-soluble vitamins from your digestive system, delivering these nutrients to cells where they’re used as fuel. And it also removes excess fluid – known as ‘lymph’ – and waste products from the spaces between the cells and organs of the body.”Willcock says that a healthy lymphatic system can become compromised due to illness, lack of physical activity, stress, poor diet or toxic overload. This can lead to a range of issues, including tissue swelling, poor skin tone, excess weight, cellulite, headaches, joint pain, fatigue and greater susceptibility to illness.“Lymphatic drainage massage can help to keep the body running smoothly by improving lymphatic flow,” she says. “The massage gently targets the delicate lymph vessels and nodes that sit just below the skin, which only require very light pressure in order to move fluid through. By contrast, treatments like aromatherapy, sports and Swedish massage use a firmer touch to work into a different area of the body and the muscles.“What does a lymphatic drainage massage do?Lymphatic drainage massage, or manual lymphatic drainage as it is also known, can help the body to maintain proper blood circulation, body fluid balance and immune function.It’s a massage technique that works to encourage the natural movement of lymph fluids, with studies (opens in new tab) suggesting it may help people with the following health conditions:Rheumatoid arthritisLymphedema (swelling in the legs, feet or arms)Fibromyalgia (a long-term condition that causes inflammation, discoloration of the skin and swelling) Chronic venous insufficiency (when leg veins don’t allow blood to flow back to the heart, causing blood to pool in the legs)A randomized controlled trial (opens in new tab) looking into the impact that lymphatic drainage massage had on health-related quality of life and symptoms of chronic venous insufficiency also found that it helped to reduce pain levels.What are the potential benefits of a lymphatic drainage massage?“The lymphatic system supports your immune system by removing toxins, getting rid of excess fluid and helping your body to absorb vitamins from your digestive system,” says Willcocks. “As we know, the lymphatic system can often get blocked or overrun because of things like stress, illness and an unhealthy lifestyle. While a good diet and regular exercise are important, lymphatic drainage massage may give your lymphatic system a boost, leading to a wide range of health, aesthetic and fitness benefits.” These could include:Reducing swelling caused by water retentionBoosting the immune system to help prevent illness and disease Removing pathogens and toxinsImproving digestionHelping you feel lighter and less bloatedAiding sleep and relaxationImproving body shapeSupporting faster muscle recovery to aid with exerciseHow to perform a lymphatic drainage massage As well as receiving a lymphatic drainage massage from a certified therapist, you can learn basic techniques to use at home.“To perform lymphatic drainage massage, use gentle pressure that only affects the skin - that is to say, don’t press so hard that you feel the muscle,” says Lizzie Read, sports massage and sports therapy coach from P3RFORM (opens in new tab). “Use a flat palm, or fingertips, and soft, smooth movements. Although lymphatic massage can be used to reduce swelling and inflammation, avoid directly massaging any areas that are swollen as this could cause further irritation to that area. “Lymph fluid ultimately drains into the bloodstream at the base of the neck, so this is the most important place to focus any lymphatic massage - even if you have swelling or inflammation in other areas. Use slow, mindful movements - not hard and fast like you might find with deep tissue massage. Find a light rhythm while practicing lymphatic massage. Do not massage in circular motions, massage in strokes, in one direction only.”ReferencesBergmann, A., Baiocchi, J., & de Andrade, M. (2021). Conservative treatment of lymphedema: the state of the art. *Journal vascular brasileiro*, 20, e20200091. (opens in new tab) dos Santos Crisóstomo, R. S., Costa, D. S., de Luz Belo Martins, C., Fernandes, T. L., & Armada-da-Silva, P. A. (2015). Influence of manual lymphatic drainage on health-related quality of life and symptoms of chronic venous insufficiency: a randomized controlled trial. *Archives of physical medicine and rehabilitation*, 96(2), 283–291. (opens in new tab) Today’s best massage gun deals (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab)\$159 (opens in new tab)View Deal (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab)View Deal (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab)View Deal (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab)View Deal (opens in new tab)

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