

The use of compression in the management of lymphoedema*

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Position

The Australasian Lymphology Association (ALA) endorses the use of compression in its various forms for the effective management of lymphoedema. Compression is considered both a clinically effective and a cost-effective treatment for people with lymphoedema. Well applied and appropriate compression improves lymphatic drainage while reducing lymph accumulation, inflammatory processes, and the risk of infection.

A range of different compression applications are available for lymphoedema management, including bandages, garments, adjustable wraps and intermittent pneumatic compression devices. Individuals with lymphoedema should have access to the form of compression which suits their individual needs. They should be informed of the variable applications to enable informed treatment decisions balanced with lifestyle factors. Due to the potential to degrade over time, compression applications require replacement and/or review at variable intervals. Inappropriate compression can lead to negative consequences for the individual. All Australian state and territory governments now provide full or partial funding for compression garments for eligible people with lymphoedema. New Zealand provides some funding for compression garments; however, eligibility and level of funding varies widely between regions. Details of garment funding support schemes are provided on the ALA website

<https://www.lymphoedema.org.au/about-lymphoedema/compression-garment-schemes/>

ALA recommendations

Based on currently available evidence, the ALA recommends:

- all people with lymphoedema have access to compression in an application to suit their individual needs and lifestyle
- therapists who are prescribing compression for lymphoedema management have an appropriate level of training and are working within their scope of practice to enable thorough assessment of the person with lymphoedema and any contraindications. Details can be obtained from Australasian Lymphology Association (lymphoedema.org.au)
- compression garments be replaced regularly to maintain the prescribed level of compression to manage the lymphoedema.

*Based on the ALA Position Paper of the same name