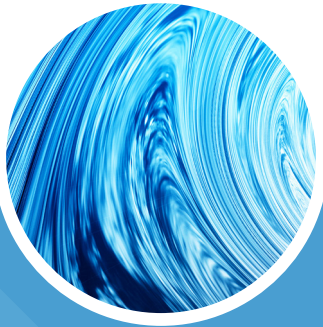


Lymphedema Bandaging for the Leg



Allina Health

**COURAGE KENNY
REHABILITATION
INSTITUTE**

Lymphedema

Lymphedema is a type of swelling caused by an abnormal build up of fluid. The veins and lymphatic vessels usually remove this fluid, but when the lymphatic system is not working right, lymphedema occurs.

Using special types of bandages to apply pressure will help the fluid move better within the tissues.

How to Bandage Your Leg

1. Apply a low-pH moisturizing skin lotion (such as Eucerin® or Nivea®) to your leg.
2. Put the stockinette on the leg. Cover the leg from the toes to the knee or groin.



3. Wrapping the toes: Start with a prefolded elastic gauze bandage. Make one complete circle around the base of the foot (just below the toes).



4. Wrap each toe individually. Anchor the bandage around the base of the toes. Starting at the top of the big toe, make circular turns from the base of the nail to the bottom of the toe. Keep slight tension on the bandage. Wrap each toe except for the little toe.



5. Start the cotton padding (10 cm wide) at the base of the foot, just below the toes. Wrap the entire foot with several turns (about 2 to 3) of the padding. The calf is then cushioned with the remaining padding bandage. To get a double layer of padding, let the bandage overlap the previous turn by about 50 percent.



Note: To have more compression on the leg, your therapist may add precut foam pieces into the bandage. These will be secured into place with a cream-colored bandage. Using moderate tension, secure foam in place with the bandage to mold to the shape of the leg. Your therapist will help you decide what is right for you.

6. The first compression bandage (6 cm wide) begins close to the toes with one complete circle around the foot.



7. Holding the foot at a 90 degree angle, lead the bandage around the back of the ankle, crossing to the other side. Bring the bandage back down to the top of the foot near base of the toes, circling around the foot again. Repeat these steps until the entire bandage has been used.



8. Begin the second compression bandage (8 cm wide) with a circle just around the ankle.



9. Lead the bandage diagonally downward, covering the heel.



10. The next circle covers the ankle, overlapping the previous circle.



11. Then cover the sole, overlapping the previous circle which went around the heel.



12. Use the remaining bandage with moderate tension in the same steps until you have enough compression. Use any remaining bandage around the calf. Each bandage turn on the calf overlaps the previous one by 50 percent.

13. The third compression bandage (10 cm wide) begins above the ankle in a circular direction. Each individual turn overlaps the previous one by 50 percent. Keep moderate tension on the bandage. Use the entire bandage as you move up toward the knee.



14. Apply a fourth 10 cm wide compression bandage in the same way to the calf. Be sure to apply enough tape at the top of the bandage to keep it in place.



If bandaging the thigh, continue with the following steps:

15. Cotton padding (15 cm wide) starts at the knee.



Double or triple the padding for more protection in the back of the knee.



16. Continue with the padding, covering the entire thigh.



17. If using foam then use the cream-colored bandage, to secure precut foam pieces on the front and back of the thigh. Using moderate tension, secure foam in place with the bandage to mold the shape of leg.

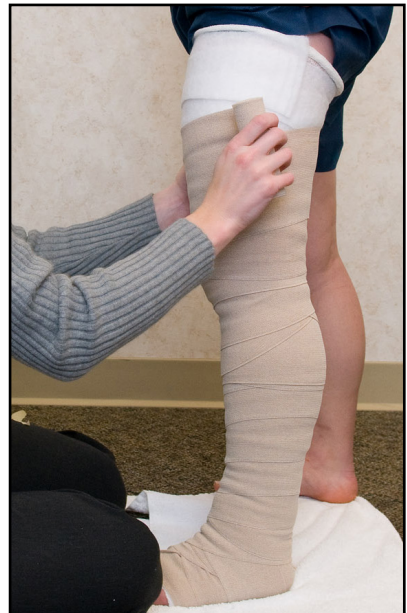
18. Begin the next compression bandage (10 cm wide) below the knee. After anchoring, bring it diagonally across the back of the knee, once around the thigh and back down to the starting point of the bandage.



Note: This crisscross behind the knee gives more protection in the back of the knee. The remaining bandage is then brought up in a circular fashion (covering 50 percent of the previous turn) around the knee to the thigh.



19. The next compression bandage (12 cm wide) starts above the knee and continues to cover the thigh toward the groin. Each individual turn overlaps the previous one by about 50 percent. Keep moderate tension on the bandage.



20. If needed, another 12 cm wide compression bandage can start again at the end of the knee working up the leg in a circular motion. The bandage is then taped below the groin. Be sure to apply enough tape at the top of the bandage to keep it in place.



Note: It is important to have enough compression, but it should not cause numbness, tingling or pain in any part of the leg.

If these symptoms do not go away by moving your ankle or foot, remove the bandages right away. Check the skin for redness and/or irritation. Try to reapply the bandages with less tension or layers.

How Often Bandages Should Be Washed

Wash the bandages about every two to four days (when they look soiled or lack elasticity). Washing the bandages help make the fabric elastic again. Plan to rotate between two sets of bandages.

How To Wash the Bandages

Put the bandages in a mesh bag. Set your washer to the delicate or gentle cycle (in cold water). Do not use bleach or fabric softener. Use a mild detergent. Let the bandages air dry. Do not put the bandages in the dryer or hang them on an outdoor clothesline.

If you hang the bandages (inside), fold them in half so the weight of the water does not cause them to stretch as they dry. Do not wring or stretch the bandages while they are wet. Roll the bandages after they are dry. (This makes them easier to put on.)

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you have:

- any signs of infection:
 - redness, warmth or tenderness
 - blisters or rash
 - chills
 - fever
- increased swelling
- pain, numbness or tingling
- trouble bandaging your leg.



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