

Doctors Corner: Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD)

What is MLD? Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) is an advanced therapy in which the practitioner uses a range of specialised and gentle rhythmic pumping techniques to move the skin in the direction of the lymph flow.

This stimulates the lymphatic vessels which carry substances vital to the defence of the body and removes waste products. The first visit will include a consultation during which the therapist will recommend the number and frequency of future sessions. Each session will last approximately one hour. Where appropriate the therapist will work in conjunction with your medical practitioner.

What are the benefits? MLD is both preventative and remedial and can enhance your well-being.

Furthermore, MLD:

Is deeply relaxing

Promotes the healing of fractures, torn ligaments, sprains and lessens pain.

Can improve many chronic conditions: sinusitis, rheumatoid arthritis, scleroderma, acne and other skin conditions.

May strengthen the immune system as part of “detox” treatment.

Relieves fluid congestion: swollen ankles, tired puffy eyes and swollen legs due to pregnancy.

Is an effective component of the treatment and control of lymphoedema (which may occur after cancer treatment) and assists in conditions arising from venous insufficiency.

Promotes healing of wounds and burns and improves the appearance of old scars.

Minimises or reduces stretch marks.

Can be used to speed healing after cosmetic surgery.

The History During the early 1930's Dr. Emil Vodder created a unique range of movements which brought relief from chronic conditions such as sinus congestion and catarrh. Since Vodder's pioneering work, MLD has spread world-wide and has become a popular treatment in many European hospitals and clinics. It is now beginning to gain acceptance in the UK as a component in the treatment and control of lymphoedema.

There are 4 main areas of treatment for MLD.

1 - Cosmetic Surgery. 2 – Detox. 3 – Breast cancer. 4 –

Which are in detail in the next 4 pages:-

1 - Cosmetic Surgery – Speeding up Recovery:

According to the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, more and more people are making the decision to enhance their appearance through cosmetic surgery. Some of the most popular procedures opted for by men and women include breast augmentation, eyelid, face and neck lifts, liposuction and rhinoplasty.

A downside of cosmetic surgery is the initial after effects, such as swelling and bruising, which are experienced by patients post surgery. The time it takes for the skin to recover can differ from person to person due to many factors such as age, general health, lifestyle etc.; however, a course of MLD treatment makes the healing process MUCH faster.

What is Manual Lymphatic Drainage and how can it help? Described as “One of the best kept secrets on the health and beauty scene”, MLD’s intensely relaxing effect masks the strength of the treatment itself. It is a very gentle, light touch massage that improves the efficiency of the lymphatic system – the body’s waste disposal system. Specific and gentle movements of the skin stimulate and increase the rate of removal of waste products, toxins and excess fluid from the body’s tissues.

MLD is regularly prescribed in Europe to improve healing and reduce recovery time after cosmetic surgery. Treatment pre and post surgery is often recommended to get the lymphatic system in peak condition to help reduce the swelling and bruising, keep it operating at optimum levels to accelerate the healing process, encourage better scar formation and ultimately reveal the new you in less time.

The MLD Treatment – what to expect:

The first visit to a trained MLDUK practitioner will include a consultation during which the therapist will recommend the number and frequency of future sessions. Each session will last approximately one hour. Where appropriate the therapist will work in conjunction with your medical practitioner.

At an MLD session you will be asked to remove some of your clothing and lie down on the treatment bed where you will be covered in towels to keep you warm. You are now in the qualified hands of your MLD therapist, so lie back and enjoy one of the most relaxing treatments you have ever experienced.

As no oils or powders are used it is completely safe even for those with sensitive skin.

Are there any side effects to the treatment? There are usually no bad side effects and it is perfectly safe to eat before and after a MLD treatment. It helps to drink some water after your treatment and you may need to go to the toilet more often, as the re-energised lymphatic system starts to recycle excess fluid and waste. After an MLD treatment, you should feel more relaxed and clear headed!

2 - Detox – January is a popular month to start a detox, after the excesses of Christmas and New Year celebrations, however, there are lots of other times of year when we look to ‘clean up our act’ – in preparation for a big event such as wedding, as part of a beach body regime for Spring or Summer holidays or fitting into that LBD for a birthday or Christmas party.

Many people embark on a detox by changing their dietary and drinking habits, introducing regular exercise and renewing a beauty regime. Adding Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) to the detox mix or trying it out as a stand-alone therapy will deliver powerful and noticeable results.

What is Manual Lymphatic Drainage? MLD is a specialised massage technique developed in the 1930’s by the Danish practitioner Dr Emil Vodder and widely recognised and practised in American and European clinics to treat a variety of different conditions.

How does Manual Lymphatic Drainage help the body detox? Described as “One of the best kept secrets on the health and beauty scene”, MLD’s intensely relaxing effect masks the strength of the treatment itself. It is a very gentle, light touch massage that improves the ability of the body’s lymphatic system to cleanse from the inside out.

Specific and gentle movements of the skin stimulate and increase the rate of removal of waste products, toxins and excess fluid from the body’s tissues resulting in:

MLD also has a tonic effect on intestinal peristalsis, which in turn will aid digestion.

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3 - Cancer – Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK. About 46,000 women get breast cancer in the UK each year. Most of them (8 out of 10) are over 50, but younger women and, in rare cases; men can also get breast cancer.

Coping with a cancer diagnosis and resulting treatment is an emotionally and physically difficult journey for the patient and their family. Following the removal of lymph nodes and radiation therapy, Secondary Lymphoedema or swelling of the arm affects about 25% of breast cancer patients. Symptoms of Secondary Lymphoedema can include:

- a feeling of fullness or heaviness
- tightness and stretching of the skin
- swelling
- reduced movement of the joints
- thickening and dryness of the skin
- discomfort and/or pain
- clothing, shoes or jewellery (such as rings or watches) feeling tighter than usual

This condition can cause additional pain, discomfort and anxiety; however, it can also be successfully treated and managed by a non-invasive therapy called, Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD).

So what is Manual Lymphatic Drainage? Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) is a very gentle, light touch massage used to treat and control different types of lymphoedema or swelling of an arm, leg or other part of the body due to an abnormal build-up of fluid called lymph in the body tissues. MLD uses the lymphatic system to cleanse the body, reduce and ease swelling and strengthen the immune system by stimulating the flow of lymph.

The lymphatic system is an important part of the body's defences against infection. It is made up of groups of lymph nodes or glands throughout the body, connected by a network of lymphatic vessels. It contains cells which fight infection, transports excess fluid from body tissues and gets rid of waste and bacteria.

How is MLD used to treat Secondary Lymphoedema? MLD therapists treat lymphoedema using Complex Decongestive Therapy (CDT); an intensive treatment that combines Manual Lymphatic Drainage, compression garments, exercise and skin care. The therapist uses a range of specialised and gentle rhythmic pumping techniques to move the excess fluid into an area with a working lymph vessel system. This stimulates the lymphatic vessels and helps move excess fluid away from the swollen area so that it can drain away normally.

The MLD treatment is followed by the fitting of compression garments, to reduce limb size. The therapist will also discuss how to minimise the risk of infection by washing and moisturising the skin and the importance of regular gentle exercise to encourage efficient lymph flow.

How long will the treatment take? The treatment of lymphoedema falls roughly into two categories:

- Phase One - an intensive treatment period for reduction of the swollen area
- Phase Two - a maintenance phase intended to keep the area as

4 - Pregnancy – Swollen ankles

Mini guide - Many mums-to-be experience swollen ankles during their pregnancy. Although this type of swelling or oedema can indicate a dangerous condition called pre-eclampsia, a certain amount of oedema is normal during pregnancy, as the body naturally retains more water and the circulatory system comes under increasing pressure.

Tips such as putting your feet up and taking it easy can help to alleviate the problem, however, busy modern-day mums often don't have time to heed this advice and needlessly put up with this uncomfortable and unattractive condition, which largely affects women in the third trimester.

How can Manual Lymphatic Drainage help reduce swollen ankles? Manual Lymphatic Drainage or MLD is a very gentle, light touch massage that improves the efficiency of the lymphatic system – the body's waste disposal system. Specific and gentle movements of the skin stimulate and increase the rate of removal of waste products, toxins and excess fluid from the body's tissues resulting in reduced fluid retention, swelling and puffiness of the ankles.

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