

## **I think I might have Lymphedema. Now what do I do?**

If you are having initial symptoms of lymphedema (LE), you will most likely go to a lymphedema clinic (most often a specialized physical therapy clinic) to be measured and wrapped. In an ideal world, you'd be seen daily for an hour for up to 8 weeks. During your sessions, the Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) will measure your limb or other body part that has the LE, do Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) for several minutes to reduce the limb volume (meaning gently push the stagnating lymph fluid out of the area), and educate you on nutrition, weight loss, exercise, self MLD, infection prevention, and risk reduction activities to prevent the LE from becoming worse. Then the therapist will wrap the limb with a variety of bandages, foam sheets, or cloth wraps or garments that you will wear home and keep on for 23 hours. This process is called Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT).

These sessions, as mentioned above, would ideally continue daily until your volume numbers have stopped decreasing. This means that your arm or leg or other body part is not getting any smaller as a result of the MLD and compression bandages. This may take up to 8 weeks.

At this point, the patient is considered on "maintenance" for the rest of their life. You would only have to visit the clinic for a check up once every six months to one year. At home, daily, you would continue your exercise, proper eating, limb elevation, self MLD, wearing of your sleeve/garments/wraps, and if you have pumps, use of the pumps. You may also consider hiring a mobile Lymphatic Drainage Therapist or Lymphedema Therapist to come to your home twice a week to do MLD. He/she can also answer your ongoing questions or concerns, and guide you in your weight loss, exercise, and donning or doffing of garments.