



LIPOEDEMA

WHAT IS LIPOEDEMA?

Lipoedema is a long term and complex condition that affects women and leads to an increase in adipose tissue (fat) and pain in the legs and, sometimes, the arms. We do not know how many women have lipoedema.

The increase in weight around the legs usually starts in weight gain at times associated with hormonal changes, such as puberty, pregnancy and menopause.



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WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Women often have symptoms of unusually large fatty legs for a number of years before symptoms of pain or the feeling of severe heavy legs may occur, at which point the condition may lead them to ask their health care professional and it may be suggested they have lipoedema.

It is thought that the pain experienced by people with lipoedema is related to inflammation and reduced oxygen to the tissues. Unfortunately there is no test you can undergo to diagnose lipoedema, therefore not a lot of research exists about it.

There is no evidence of swelling in lipoedema but it is possible to have lipoedema and also suffer from lymphoedema / chronic oedema which may be related to obesity or other conditions such as vein disease.

It is not thought that lipoedema leads to weight gain but gaining weight does make the symptoms of lipoedema (pain and heaviness) worse.

TREATMENT

Many women with lipoedema are also over weight and in order to reduce the symptoms of lipoedema you should try and maintain a healthy weight (not diet). If you are very overweight you should discuss this with your primary care professional for advice.

Focus on increasing your activity/movement.

It has recently been shown that regular exercise can reduce inflammation and it increases blood flow and oxygen in the adipose tissue (fat). Exercise can help reduce the symptoms of pain and heaviness in the legs as well as being good for our mental well-being. Many patients with lipoedema say their symptoms are improved with swimming or water aerobics.

Wear compression

Compression therapy has an anti-inflammatory effect on the tissues and can improve microcirculation so wearing compression hosiery can make your legs feel more comfortable. However compression will not reduce the amount of fatty tissue or prevent an increase in fat if you gain weight. Flat knit compression hosiery may

be more comfortable and would require referral to a specialist to be measured, prescribed and fitted.

Liposuction

There is not enough evidence to support recommending liposuction for lipoedema, it is not widely available on the NHS and any effects may only be temporary.

If you think you have lipoedema or if you feel that your mental health is affected by lipoedema you should get in touch with your primary health care professional.

OTHER SUPPORT

Lipoedema UK

Our focus is to educate doctors, health professionals and the public about Lipoedema and its symptoms, so it may be diagnosed and treated earlier.

Because Lipoedema is frequently mistaken for obesity or Lymphoedema, many women don't get appropriate advice or treatment – a state of affairs we are on a mission to change.

W: lipoedema.co.uk

The British Lymphology Society

Established in 1985, The British Lymphology Society (BLS) is the foremost organisation for healthcare professionals involved in managing patients with lymphoedema/chronic oedema. It provides a strong professional voice for members and seeks to achieve high standards of care and equitable access to treatment across the UK, raise awareness of the condition and promote early detection and intervention.

W: thebls.com | E: admin@thebls.com

Accelerate

We're based in East London but can accept national referrals from your GP / specialist to our world-class centre where we pioneer and trial experimental new treatments for chronic wounds, lymphoedema and mobility challenges.

T: 020 3819 6022 | E: hello@acceleratecic.com

W: acceleratecic.com

NHS Choices

The official NHS website, which provides vital information and support about leg and foot signs and other symptoms. T: 111 | E: nhs.uk

Find out more about the campaign and how you can get involved

legsmatter.org

