NHS
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# Holidays and travel for people with lymphoedema

Many patients with lymphoedema are worried about the practicalities of travelling and taking holidays. Planning is the key to avoiding problems on holiday.

## How do I prepare for travel?

**Do not** have any required vaccinations in your affected limb.

## Cellulitis

If you have had more than one episode of cellulitis in the past and if you are travelling abroad, it is advisable to have a course of antibiotics to take with you just in case. You will need to discuss this with your GP. Please see the cellulitis guidelines for further information (available on the lymphoedema website overleaf).

## Travel essentials

We would recommend packing a small travel kit with the following:

- a good quality sun cream - at least spf 30
- good quality adhesive dressings with an antiseptic fabric (make sure you do not react to Elastoplast)
- antiseptic cream (such as Savlon) to treat any cuts, scratches or bites
- some anti-fungal powder in case you develop a fungal infection or athlete's foot. Tea tree oil is an alternative treatment option; this can be diluted for prevention
- products to counteract skin irritation from insect bites or stings
- insect repellent spray or cream.

Make sure you have packed your spare compression hosiery in your hand luggage in case your luggage is delayed. If you use a hosiery applicator aid then be sure to also pack this.

## Travelling

## Flying

There is a concern that the cabin pressure on an aeroplane will have an adverse effect on lymphoedema. The research suggests that there is no effect from a short-haul flight but that long-haul flights can temporarily increase lymphoedema. Extended periods of inactivity will have an adverse effect, so we recommend:

- You always wear your compression hosiery when flying. Make sure this is fitted a few hours prior to take off, during the flight and for a couple of hours after the flight as a minimum. This is to ensure that any tissue pressures can normalise that may have been affected by flying.
- You may wish to do your simple lymphatic drainage before and after flying to improve lymphatic drainage and relieve any temporary increase in swelling.
- You move as much as possible during the flight, doing sitting arm or leg exercises and getting up to move around as much as possible.
- If you have leg lymphoedema, ask for a seat with additional leg room to ensure you have space to move during the flight.
- You wear loose clothing and ensure there is no restriction that might affect your lymphoedema.

Continued overleaf

## Car and bus travel

Once again it is vital to wear your compression garment for any mode of transport that will mean that you are inactive for long periods of time. Try to plan regular stops so you can take a walk and move / exercise an affected limb, or do some massage as required during the journey.

## What about during my holiday?

Whilst on your holiday:

- continue wearing any compression garments as much as possible.
- avoid getting sunburnt
- make sure you protect yourself against insect bites
- consider wearing shoes to protect your feet on the beach and in the sea if you have leg swelling
- continue your usual daily skin hygiene and care routine and apply your emollient at least once daily in the evening to prevent your skin becoming dry
- relax and enjoy your holiday.

## Further information

Further information can be found in the Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN) Holiday and Travel advice fact sheet available from the LSN.

Tel: 020 73514480

www.lymphoedema.org

Or visit our website:

www.royalcornwall.nhs.uk/services/therapies/occupational-therapy/lymphoedema/

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

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