



Can
your
patient
self-manage?



For patients with chronic oedema, it is crucial, where possible, that they engage in their care.

Self-care can offer a means to maintain or even improve the capacity to live well over time¹.



You should consider:



Is your patient **willing** to self manage their condition?



Is your patient **health literate** and able to understand self management?



Is your patient at the **centre** of decision making and care delivery?



Is your patient **supported**?



PHYSICAL/ MENTAL ABILITY

Can the patient physically apply and remove compression garments/wraps?

Is the patient able to reach their limbs?

Can they understand their treatment and care?

Are they mentally and physically able to self-care?

Will they be able to monitor for signs of infection/problems?



SUPPORT/ SITUATION

Are they dependent on carers or family for care delivery?

Are there financial constraints which might form a barrier?

Is the patient environment inclusive to self-care?

How much support will a patient need before being confident to self-care?



MOTIVATION


Do they understand why self-care will help them?

Are they willing and ready to carry out self-care?

Have they had any negative experiences in the past which might influence how well they cope?



Promoting self-care can **empower patients** and **reduce nursing workloads**. Patients should never feel abandoned but should have support available as needed.



Tips for helping your patient to self-manage

With thanks to the National Wound Care Strategy Programme, who have prepared information for patients on self-care.

If you and your patient have agreed together that they are able to self-care, these tips will help you to explain to your patient how to care for their wound and when to seek help.

Ensure that your patient understands which dressings to use and how often to change them. It is important that patients know where and how to access additional dressings.



TAKING CARE OF THEIR SKIN

Recommend your patients gently wash and dry their skin and moisturise daily at bedtime. Avoid infection risks such as: scratches, cuts and grazes, insect or flea bites, or fungal nail infections (i.e. athlete's foot).



LIFESTYLE FACTORS

Patient should be encouraged to eat healthily, move regularly and use the affected limb as much as possible. Avoid temperature extremes, which can stress the lymphatic system and worsen your swelling. Patients should avoid wearing tight clothing that may restrict swelling.



APPLYING THEIR COMPRESSION GARMENT

Tips can be provided to help patients apply their compression garments, such as: Turn the garment inside out. Use household rubber or cotton gardening gloves to help with positioning and to smooth out creases. Avoid wearing jewellery or digging nails into the knitted fabric. Avoid overstretching the fabric or folding over the top of the garment.



WEARING THEIR COMPRESSION GARMENT

Patients should apply their garment each morning and wear it all day, especially when active, and then remove it before going to bed. Patients may need to readjust their garment during the day - the material should always be evenly distributed. Patients should not wear their garment to bed, unless instructed.

Looking out for problems

Make sure that your patient knows what to look for and when to ask for more help. This should include understanding that the garment should be firm-fitting and comfortable, but never tight or painful.

If the patient notices any:

- **tingling**
- **pain**
- **numbness**

or they think they are developing an **infection** they must call and ask for help immediately.

If your patient has a lower limb wound, please also refer them to the relevant self-care guide for wound care.

Always make sure that support systems are in place and that your patient knows where to go to ask questions or seek further support. This includes making sure that the patient has contacts for accessing dressings and supplies as well as knowing how and when to call NHS 111.





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