5 things every person with swelling should know about lymphoedema

Lymphoedema is a chronic and permanent swelling which can affect any area of the body, most commonly affecting the limbs. It results from poor drainage of the body’s lymphatic system. It affects over 100,000 people in the UK of all ages and genders. It can impact on your body image, self-esteem and cause not only physical, but emotional distress as well.
If you notice any unexplained swelling you should consult your GP and, if necessary, ask for a referral to a specialist clinic.

1 CAUSES
   a. Primary – i.e. a person is born with a lymphatic problem and swelling occurs for no apparent reason. This can happen at any point in life and can run in families.
   b. Secondary – Cancer treatment which involved removing lymph nodes and radiotherapy can make you more prone to developing lymphoedema; If you have a long term condition and cannot walk very far you may develop swelling in the legs.

2 SKIN CARE
   a. Wash daily and moisturise the skin
   b. Avoid cuts, scratches and burns to your skin which may get infected.
   c. Avoid injections, blood tests and blood pressure measurements to your swollen (or at risk) limb, unless essential for treatment of other conditions.
   d. See your GP if you have any signs of infection: area of redness, hot to touch, fever.

3 EXERCISE
   a. Gentle exercise will help move fluid which is causing the swelling from your limb
   b. Sensible positioning of the affected limb/s can help reduce swelling.
   c. NB: It is important not to sleep with your feet down. Sleep in a bed and not in a chair.

4 COMPRESSION
   a. Garments such as stockings or arm sleeves, if prescribed need to be worn every day as directed by your medical practitioner and removed at night.
   b. Multi-layer Lymphoedema Bandaging may be applied in more severe cases

5 MASSAGE
   a. Simple Lymph Drainage can be taught for you or your carer to do daily to assist in drainage of your limb.
   b. Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) should only be done by a trained therapist if your medical practitioner recommends it – LSN, MLD UK and BLS can provide further information and advice

www.thebls.com  info@thebls.com  01452 790178