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Nighttime Compression Therapy – When and Why to Use It

Introduction

For many people with lymphedema, daytime compression garments are a familiar part of daily care. But what happens when the day ends? While swelling may lessen during rest, it doesn't always disappear—and for some, nighttime compression therapy is a valuable tool to maintain limb volume and prevent flare-ups.

Why Consider Nighttime Compression?

During sleep, muscles are less active, meaning the natural “muscle pump” that assists lymph flow is at rest. Without that movement, fluid can accumulate, especially in more advanced lymphedema. Nighttime compression helps:

- **Maintain the limb volume achieved during the day**
- **Prevent rebound swelling** that can occur overnight
- **Support ongoing tissue softness** and reduce fibrosis
- **Extend the benefits** of manual lymph drainage (MLD) and other treatments

When Nighttime Compression Is Recommended

- **Moderate to advanced lymphedema** where swelling returns quickly
- **Persistent swelling despite daytime garment use**
- **Fibrotic or firm tissue** that needs prolonged, gentle pressure
- **Post-intensive therapy maintenance** following CDT (Complete Decongestive Therapy)
- **High-risk situations**, such as immediately after long travel or surgery recovery

Types of Nighttime Compression Options

- **Specialized nighttime garments** with softer, foam-padded fabrics that allow comfort during sleep
- **Adjustable wrap systems** that can be loosened or tightened as needed
- **Custom quilted compression devices** designed for long-term use and individual fit

Important Considerations

Nighttime compression should be:

- **Properly fitted** by a certified lymphedema therapist
- **Comfortable enough for restful sleep** without restricting circulation
- **Part of a comprehensive plan** that includes daytime compression, exercise, skin care, and monitoring

Bottom line: Nighttime compression therapy isn't for everyone, but when used appropriately, it can be a game-changer in preventing overnight swelling and maintaining long-term results. Speak with your lymphedema therapist to determine if it's right for your care plan.



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