

Liposuction for chronic lymphoedema

Information for the public

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This procedure can be used for chronic lymphoedema because it works well, but there is a risk of serious complications including venous thromboembolism, fat embolism and fluid overload.

Chronic lymphoedema is the swelling and build-up of body fluid and sometimes fat, because of problems with the lymphatic system. It most commonly affects the arms and legs. Liposuction is usually used for those people for whom other conservative measures have not improved symptoms. This procedure is typically done under general anaesthesia but can be done under local anaesthesia. This procedure uses suction to remove fluid and fat through punctures in the skin. Afterwards, a compression garment must be worn for life and only removed for short periods. The aim of the procedure is to reduce swelling and improve function.

The [NHS website](#) may have information on your condition and treatment options.

You can [search the NHS website for information about consultants and hospitals](#) that offer this procedure.

Is this procedure right for me?

You should be included in [making decisions about your care](#).

Your healthcare professionals should explain the risks and benefits of this procedure and how it is done. They should discuss your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should offer you more information about the procedure. Your family or carers can be involved if you want or need them to be.

You will be asked to decide whether you agree (consent) to have the procedure. Find out more about [giving consent to treatment on the NHS website](#).

Some questions to think about

- How many appointments will I need?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- Will I have to stay in hospital?
- What happens if it does not work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I do not want the procedure?
- Are other treatments available?

More information

- [NICE's information on interventional procedures guidance](#) explains what an interventional procedure is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on interventional procedures recommendations](#) explains what standard arrangements are.

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