

## Manual Lymphatic Drainage Therapy

**The Lymph System**—The Lymphatic System is a very important set of vessels that removes excess fluid, viruses, bacteria, waste from cell metabolism, inorganic substances, water, fats, and proteins from the body. Removal of protein is especially important because proteins draw water to themselves, so protein cells stuck in the interstitial spaces causes edema (swelling). The lymphatic system is our immune system. Lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, are produced in the thymus & bone marrow. Lymph is normally moved through the body with deep breathing & everyday movement of the arms & legs, but sometimes the body needs extra help from a certified therapist.

The lymph system starts as tiny vessels--only a single-cell wide--that eventually branch into larger and larger tubes. Inside some vessels are one-way valves. The lymph fluid pushes them open & then they slam shut so the fluid can't flow backward. Lymph nodes throughout the body filter the fluid and contain immune-boosting lymphocytes that attack & destroy foreign bacteria, viruses & cancer cells. Nodes are found mostly in the neck, sternum, armpits, groin, abdomen, & behind the knees. The lymph fluid finally empties into subclavian veins at the throat and then enters the bloodstream via the heart. When the lymph system works well, we feel healthy & have a strong defense against illness. When it's sluggish or blocked we can have swelling, feel tired, and be more susceptible to colds & infections. Cancer patients may develop lymphedema and need regular drainage.

**Manual Lymphatic Drainage Therapy**—Manual Lymphatic Drainage Therapy (MLD) is **very gentle**. It increases the flow of lymph & stimulates the production of lymphocytes. Most lymph vessels (about 70 percent) are located just below the skin. By using very light pressure, stretching specific places on the skin, a therapist can stimulate the lymph system to work more efficiently & help it move the lymph toward the throat. Work on the upper body pulls lymph like a vacuum effect from the lower body. Your therapist starts at your throat & neck with very gentle pressure, moves to your sternum, armpits, arms, abdomen, groin, legs, & feet. (Some areas may not be worked on if you have just had surgery, but a trained lymphedema therapist will know how to work around that area). Sometimes a session will conclude after the front of the body is drained, & sometimes she will drain parts of your back and legs as well. Per day, 2-4 liters of lymph are filtered through the system. Lymphatic drainage can increase the volume of flow by as much as 20 times.

Deep breathing is an important part of MLD. Everyone can benefit from deep, slow, belly breaths throughout the day to bring nutrients to the tissues & speed up lymph flow to boost immunity. During your session, your therapist will work with you on an abdominal sequence with belly breathing to flush the nodes deep within the abdominal cavity.

**NOTE FOR POST-OP PATIENTS:** MLD does **NOT** involve deeply pushing lymph out of the body through incisions and is **NOT** painful. This type of work is illegal.

**Who Should Get It & How Often?**--Almost everyone can have MLD. You can have a full hour of MLD, or split your session into half massage/half MLD, or even tell your therapist to finish with 5 minutes of MLD. A little goes a long way! MLD is often given to cancer patients who've had nodes removed, or on cosmetic surgery patients to speed healing & reduce scar tissue & pain, but any healthy person can have MLD. If you're feeling tired with low energy, if you have bronchitis or swollen glands, if you want to boost your immunity before a long plane flight or before flu season, if you want to clear up acne, lymphatic drainage will benefit you. It can cause a profound feeling of relaxation, detoxification, and can give you a rush of energy. One to two sessions per week is the norm, or just occasionally to boost your system. However, immediately after cosmetic surgery, it is strongly recommended twice a week for 4-6 weeks to speed healing and reduce scarring.

**Who Should Not Have Lymphatic Drainage?**--Those with untreated cellulitis or congestive heart failure, recent deep vein thrombosis, fever, renal (kidney) failure, hyperthyroid, are just some of the contraindications for MLD. Your Lymphatic Drainage-certified massage therapist will know if it is safe for you to have a session. Also get clearance from your doctor before setting up a session.

### What it helps with—

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Post-surgical edema</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lymphedema/Lipedema</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complex Regional Pain Syndrome</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bronchitis/Sinusitis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acne</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Migraine</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthens immune system</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Detoxification</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chronic Fatigue Syndrome</li></ul>

**Find a Therapist**—It is advised that you hire a Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) or Certified Manual Lymphatic Drainage Therapist (CMLDT). Go to [www.klosetraining.com](http://www.klosetraining.com) for a directory of CLTs, or phone them & ask for a list of CMLDTs near you. Also try: [www.acols.com](http://www.acols.com), [www.s4om.org](http://www.s4om.org), [www.massagetherapy.com](http://www.massagetherapy.com), [www.vodderschool.com](http://www.vodderschool.com), [www.instagram.com/lymphaticprofessionals](http://www.instagram.com/lymphaticprofessionals).