

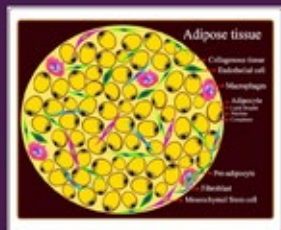


The ABCs of Lipoedema

The ABC's of Lipoedema

A
is for
**Adipose
Tissue**

Adipose tissue, or fat, is an anatomical term for loose connective tissue composed of adipocytes. Its main role is to store energy in the form of fat, although it also cushions and insulates the body. Lipoedema is made up of abnormal Adipose Tissue.



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B
is for
Bruising

Bruising occurs easily and spontaneously on lipoedema limbs possibly due to the increased fragility of small blood vessels within the fat tissue. They can often appear with patients having no knowledge of the apparent cause.



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C
is for
**Conservative
Treatments**

The goal of Conservative treatments is to aid in lipoedema management and address the symptoms associated with lipoedema. Conservative Treatments include: wearing compression; nutrition and lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise; improving lymphatic flow; managing pain and getting emotional support. Changes that reduce inflammation help your body heal.



D is for Diagnosis

Currently, the best way to diagnose lipoedema in ANZ is a by trained lymphoedema therapist, doctor, plastic and reconstructive surgeon, or vascular specialist by performing a manual inspection in conjunction with patient history. Often on touching the lipoedema fat, the medical professional can feel the atypical texture such as grains of rice, peas or even larger nodules like walnuts. This is not always the case if the lipoedema fat is deep or shallow or very swollen. There are a number of symptoms that medical professionals look for, but not all women with lipoedema have them. Research is currently being conducted around the world and the hope is that one day we will have diagnostic tools, such as imaging tests, genetic, blood or other biomarkers to assist with diagnosis.



For resources to educate the people in your life, be they medical, health or friends and family, visit our website



lipoedemaaustralia.com.au/resources

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E is for Education

Education and awareness raising is an integral role that Lipoedema Australia plays in the lipoedema world. We were so pleased to be involved in the production of the Praxhub education module for doctors and other medical professionals.



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F is for Friendship

It's important to remember you are not alone on your journey. Our 3000+ strong group is here to support you - be it with advice, sharing experiences, or simply sending you virtual hugs.



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G is for Genetics

There is often a family history of lipoedema, suggesting genetic involvement. Current research in Victoria's St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, Lymphatic and Regenerative Surgery Group (O'Brien Institute Department of SVI) and the Adelaide Lipoedema Project with University of South Australia University is aiming to discover the genes involved in lipoedema. This will increase our understanding of the underlying cause and assist with diagnostic tools, management and treatment of lipoedema.



Photo: St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, Lymphatic and Regenerative Surgery Group

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H is for Healthy Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle for people with lipoedema can reduce the impact of the condition.

Diet - eating low inflammatory foods is advisable, with many ways of eating being beneficial.

Exercise - It's important to exercise your body, whether you have lipoedema or not. Find a form of exercise that you enjoy and is within your ability.

Compression garments - aid in pain control and are beneficial in reducing symptoms of lipoedema.

Physical or occupational therapy - often manual lymphatic drainage therapy. The use of lymphatic compression pumps also can provide relief.



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I is for Inflammation

Lipoedema is characterised by a symmetrical, bilateral build-up of fat beneath the skin called subcutaneous adipose tissue (SAT). Everyone has SAT, but in lipoedema it is inflamed and painful, it can get progressively harder and larger. Often this fat contains hard, painful nodules that may be as small as a grain of rice or as large as a walnut.



Photo taken from lymphaticnetwork.org
Blog by Karen Ashforth

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J is for Joints

Women who suffer from lipoedema often suffer joint pain in the hips, knees and ankles due to joint damage caused by the excessive weight of fat and fluid accumulation. Over time, normal gait is compromised as the body attempts to adjust to a more comfortable position when walking. This abnormal posture places pressure on the joints and the soft tissue resulting in pain with inflammation.



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K is for Ketogenic Diet

A ketogenic diet is often used by people with lipoedema. Keto is an anti-inflammatory way of eating that some women with lipoedema find extremely beneficial in controlling their symptoms. Keto restricts carbohydrates. It may also be referred to as low carb, high fat (LCHF). It does not suit all - others have found benefit in the RAD, Paleo and Mediterranean diets.



Image from www.dietdoctor.com

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L is for Legs

Lipoedema presents in many types and stages, affecting leg, arm and body shape differently for us all. This is not a one size fits all disease, but we all know the impact it has on our lives! The photo launched by Lipoedema Australia in 2015 was the first time that lipoedema-affected women had shown their legs to the world and it raced around cyberspace at amazing speed.



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M is for Mental Health

Lipoedema can have a massive effect on the mental health of those affected. Many suffer from low self-esteem, lack of confidence and depression. Lipoedema often restricts social life, relationships and quality of life.



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N is for National Conference

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June Awareness Month 2021 is the new date for our 4th biennial national conference. First held in 2014, we have grown from 54 local attendees, to 134 attendees at our Gold Coast conference in 2018. We've had world renowned international and national speakers. The conference has proven itself to be both an invaluable source of information for patients and therapists, as well as a huge support for our members.



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O is for Obesity

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Lipoedema is distinct from obesity, but often the two go hand in hand, making accurate diagnosis difficult at times. However, Lipoedema is not caused by obesity. Body Mass Index (BMI) is distorted because of Lipoedema, making it inaccurate in diagnosing obesity. Frequently, we hear women with lipoedema say they have tried many diets or been accused over overeating. Eating disorders and over exercising are common. Healthy eating and lifestyle is recommended.



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P is for Pumping

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Compression pump machines are great for treatment at home. It's important to learn the correct procedure and settings from a therapist before commencing this treatment.

Sequential Gradient Pumps cause the garment to inflate and release in sequential movements that imitate the natural flow of the lymphatic cycle.



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Q is for Questions Unanswered

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Despite the strong impact of Lipoedema on millions of women across the world, currently only limited research exists to determine its cause. There IS worldwide research underway and we are rapidly learning new things about lipoedema, but at this early stage many questions about lipoedema remain unanswered. It was calls to action by patient groups like LASS that has pushed a forgotten disease into a real place in the medical world.



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R is for Reputable and Reliable

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Nine years ago when Lipoedema Australia began you were lucky to find anything about lipoedema on Google! Now a search brings up 602,000 results. Sadly, anyone can create a website and there is no 'gatekeeper' to make sure that online information on lipoedema is reputable and reliable. Working out which information you can trust is not always easy. When it comes to the best lipoedema information, reliable sources are available online through government-endorsed health websites such as Better Health Channel and bodies such as LASS - as well as overseas leading research, medical and organisations like Lipoedema Foundation, FDHS, Lipoedema UK Trust and patient organisations such as Lets Talk Lipoedema UK.



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S is for Surgery

When all conservative measures have been explored, surgery is an option for Lipoedema affected women. Recent years have seen much progress in the type and quality of Lipoedema surgery available in Australia.

ALWAYS do your due diligence in researching prior to surgery, ensuring you are dealing with a highly qualified surgeon, experienced in Lipoedema and Lymphoedema, as it is vital to preserve the viable lymphatics during surgery.



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T is for Therapists

Good therapists are invaluable in managing some of the symptoms of lipoedema. From MLD practitioners to physiotherapists, massage therapists to psychotherapists, occupational therapists and foot therapists (podiatrists). All of these therapies may assist you in your journey. For Lipoedema aware member recommended therapists and medical practitioners, check out the file in the Lipoedema Australia Support Society files on Facebook.



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U is for Upside

According to the article Lipoedema - Friend and Foe (2019) - there is an upside of lipoedema fat. The potential benefits are low risk of diabetes, normal blood pressure, normal lipid pattern despite obese BMI and lower risk of cardiovascular disease due the gynoid shape. Women with lipoedema also state that they have fewer wrinkles and a more youthful face!



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V is for Vibration

Exercise can be a challenging for those with Lipoedema, due to body shape and the weight of limbs. The benefits of doing some form of exercise will help you in the long-term by stimulating the lymphatics, strengthening muscles, reducing inflammation and boosting your mood and confidence. Whole body vibration can help - used at low frequencies for lymphatic drainage and massage, it can assist in eliminating the fluids from the body and slightly improving the appearance of the legs and hips by reducing the swelling. There is the added benefit of it being accessible in the home and suitable for all levels of fitness. However, if you have knee or joint problems check with your Doctor or Therapist first.



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W is for Water Exercise

Water exercise (Hydrotherapy) is great for women with lipoedema as water is a natural compression. No need to wear your compression in the water! It also puts less strain on the body's joints as the water naturally supports them, making it an excellent exercise for those with arthritis or dodgy knees. The water resistance also builds up the muscles and moving through the water helps increase the lymphatic flow. It's the perfect exercise!



X is for Xerox

Although we have lipoedema in common, we are all unique beings - our bodies are not Xerox copies of each other. That means that what works for one may not work for another. It also means that we progress at different rates - and the fortunate of us don't progress at all. Don't compare yourself to others - you know your body best, listen to it, love it and treat it the best way you know how.



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Y is for Yoga

Yoga benefits the mind, body and spirit. It can be done in a class or in the privacy of your home. Physical benefits include the strengthening of the body and helping with balance. Lymphatic flow is greatly improved by the deep breathing and movement that Yoga requires. Many yoga devotees report that it eases worry and anxiety.

Image from talklipoedema.org



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Z is for Zeal

The ultimate for Lipoedema Australia and all those diagnosed with the condition is to find a cure for Lipoedema. But there are many other things we have zeal for, like spreading awareness to all corners of the world, supporting those who need help managing the condition, eradicating the stigma that goes with lipoedema, and receiving Medicare recognition. It can be tough at times to stay passionate and strong in the face of adversity but together we are making a difference.



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