Lymphedema Treatment

Medical Guideline Disclaimer

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Definitions

Complex decongestion physiotherapy (CDP) (AKA manual lymph drainage [MLD] therapy)

A noninvasive regimen for the reduction of lymphedema. Each CDP session typically consists of 4 phases:

1. **Skin care:** Cleansing, lubrication, debriding and administration of antimicrobial therapy.
2. **MLD:** Gentle massage technique intended to redirect lymph and edema fluid towards adjacent functioning lymph nodes.
3. **Multi-layered compression wrapping (bandages):** For the prevention of any reaccumulation of excavated edema fluid and the ultrafiltration of additional fluid into the interstitial space.
4. **Individualized exercise with compression wrapping:** In order to enhance lymphatic flow from peripheral to central drainage components, these exercises are aimed at augmenting muscular contraction, enhancing joint mobility, strengthening the limb and reducing the muscle atrophy that frequently occurs secondary to lymphedema.

The expected duration of the physical therapy education session normally lasts 1–4 weeks, with the patient attending 3–7 times per week, depending on the progress of the therapy. This time frame is generally sufficient for the necessary teaching and instruction prerequisite for the care to be continued by the patient/caregiver in the home setting. Initially, MLD may be administered in 2 sessions per day if the

* The optimal care plan should be to include the transfer of the responsibility of care from providers in the outpatient setting to the patient in the home setting, whereby the care is provided by the patient/family/caregiver.

† MLD must be performed by a certified manual lymph drainage therapist.
lymphedema is severe, with the most significant improvement achieved within the 1st week.

Used for the treatment of acute and chronic peripheral lymphedema to facilitate the mobilization of fluid from the limbs into the trunk and central body cavity. These devices have also been used in the treatment of venous stasis, venous and arterial ulcers and for the prevention of deep vein thrombosis. Pneumatic compression devices generally consist of an inflatable garment for the arm or leg and an electrical pneumatic pump that fills the garment with compressed air. The garment is intermittently inflated and deflated with cycle times and pressures that vary among devices. Designed for use in both the home and institutional settings, the devices are generally intended to assist patients suffering from peripheral and vascular disorders, including primary or secondary lymphedema. The devices are currently used in both the primary and adjunctive treatment of lymphedema.

**Guideline**

For pneumatic compression devices, please refer to [Noridian Local Coverage Determination (LCD) for Pneumatic Compression Devices](#).

CDP is considered medically necessary when any of the following are applicable:

1. Intractable lymphedema of the extremities that is unrelieved by elevation
2. Lymphedema that interferes with activities of daily living (ADL) performance, mobility and/or safety
3. Lymphedema with evidence of ulceration

**Documentation**

**Initial evaluation and treatment — all:**

1. MD diagnosis of lymphedema with an order for CDP
2. A statement as to the ability of the patient/caregiver to follow through with the continuation of treatment on a long-term treatment plan
3. Written treatment plan by the physician or therapist who will provide the treatment after an appropriate assessment of the condition; which includes all of the following:
   a. Specific short- and long-term goals
   b. Type, amount, frequency and duration of the services
   c. Body area(s) to be treated
   d. Date that therapy was initiated
4. History and physical must include all the following:
   a. Cause of lymphedema
   b. Prior treatment history
   c. Body part/extremity measurement prior to treatment initiation
   d. Specific areas of indurated tissue, rigidity of edema, condition of nails and skin, infected sites, scars, distal pulses, pain and discomfort
e. Effect on the patient’s ability to perform ADLs
f. Prior services/modalities performed including a response to treatment

**Continuation of treatment — all:**
1. The services/modalities performed, inclusive of treatment response
2. A report demonstrating the therapeutic progress, inclusive of periodic measurements, as applicable
3. Demonstration of the patient/caregiver assimilation of the education, coupled with their ability to assume some of the treatment responsibilities

**Limitations/Exclusions**
Decompressive physical therapy will be covered for up to a 4 week course based upon the severity and location of the edema. On-going requests for further therapy must be reviewed by the Plan for medical necessity.

CDP is not covered for any of the following conditions:
1. Acute infection of the body part
2. Venous or arterial obstruction
3. Confirmed or suspected local disease or active malignancy

**References**


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Specialty-matched consultant peer review.


Applicable Procedure Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97016</td>
<td>Application of a modality to one or more areas; vasopneumatic devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97140</td>
<td>Manual therapy techniques (e.g., mobilization/ manipulation, manual lymphatic drainage, manual traction), one or more regions, each 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4600</td>
<td>Sleeve for intermittent limb compression device, replacement only, each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0650</td>
<td>Pneumatic compressor, nonsegmental home model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0651</td>
<td>Pneumatic compressor, segmental home model without calibrated gradient pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0652</td>
<td>Pneumatic compressor, segmental home model with calibrated gradient pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0655</td>
<td>Nonsegmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, half arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0657</td>
<td>Segmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, chest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>E0660</td>
<td>Nonsegmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, full leg</td>
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<tr>
<td>E0665</td>
<td>Nonsegmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, full arm</td>
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<tr>
<td>E0666</td>
<td>Nonsegmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, half leg</td>
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<tr>
<td>E0667</td>
<td>Segmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, full leg</td>
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<tr>
<td>E0668</td>
<td>Segmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, full arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0669</td>
<td>Segmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, half leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0670</td>
<td>Segmental pneumatic appliance for use with pneumatic compressor, integrated, 2 full legs and trunk</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E0671</td>
<td>Segmental gradient pressure pneumatic appliance, full leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0672</td>
<td>Segmental gradient pressure pneumatic appliance, full arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0673</td>
<td>Segmental gradient pressure pneumatic appliance, half leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E0676</td>
<td>Intermittent limb compression device (includes all accessories), not otherwise specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8950</td>
<td>Complex lymphedema therapy, each 15 minutes</td>
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### Applicable ICD-10 Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I89.0</td>
<td>Lymphedema, not elsewhere classified</td>
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<tr>
<td>I97.2</td>
<td>Postmastectomy lymphedema syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q82.0</td>
<td>Hereditary lymphedema</td>
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