



Alternative Treatment for Chronic Swelling and Vein Problems

– Compression Therapy, an Effective Post-Surgical or Preventative Modality with Many Health Benefits

While those who suffer from lymphedema and chronic venous disease are the main candidates for Compression Therapy, this unique treatment has been found beneficial as a complementary therapy for enhancing the immune system, digestion, circulation, detoxification, wound care, weight loss, and cellulite reduction as well.

Broadly used in hospitals in Europe and now also offered by numerous specialists in the US, Compression Therapy provides a safe and efficient way to relieve symptoms of lymphedema, venous diseases, and several other conditions.

What is Lymphedema?

Lymphedema is the chronic swelling of the limb caused by impaired flow of the lymphatic system. It is a degenerative condition which can get worse over time without treatment.

The lymphatic system works as a filtration system: it is a network of specialized vessels (lymph vessels) throughout the body that collects excess lymph fluid containing proteins, lipids, and waste products from the tissues. This fluid is then carried to the lymph nodes, which filter waste products and contain infection-fighting cells called lymphocytes. The excess fluid in the lymph vessels is eventually returned to the circulatory system (bloodstream). When the lymph vessels are blocked or damaged, they are unable to carry lymph fluid away from the tissues, and localized swelling (lymphedema) occurs in the limb as a result.

Lymphedema most often affects a single arm or leg, but in rare cases both limbs can be affected.

Causes

There are two types of lymphedema. Primary lymphedema is the result of an anatomical abnormality of the lymph vessels and is a rare, inherited condition. Secondary lymphedema results from an identifiable damage to or obstruction of normally-functioning lymph vessels and nodes caused by medical procedures, injuries or infection. This type of lymphedema often occurs in women who have had breast cancer surgery, particularly when followed by radiation treatment.

Symptoms

Most common symptoms are swelling, aching, discomfort, restricted range of motion, non-healing wounds, hardening or discoloration of the skin, recurring infections, and cellulites. Lymphedema first may be noticed as a feeling of heaviness, tingling, tightness, or shooting pains in the affected area. These symptoms may be present before there is obvious swelling of an arm or leg.

While according to the medical field, there is no cure for lymphedema, Compression Therapy has been proven a safe and effective way to provide relief and help reduce the swelling and discomfort.

What is Chronic Venous Disease?

Chronic Venous Disease (CVD) refers to chronic conditions related to or caused by defective or damaged veins, typically occurring in the legs. Increased blood pressure (most commonly caused by excess weight, leg injury, or blood clots) strains the veins, which can prompt valves within the veins to fail to work efficiently, resulting in the blood flow to back up and eventually pool out in the legs. This can lead to the development of varicose veins, spider veins, and painful swelling of the legs.

Causes

The most common factors in the development of chronic venous diseases are the following: leg injury or surgery; excessive weight gain or obesity; prolonged standing; extended periods without movement; blood clots; weak vein walls (hereditary); hormonal influences of pregnancy, puberty, and menopause; the use of birth control pills; exposure to ultraviolet rays; and conditions that cause increased pressure in the abdomen, such as tumors, constipation, and externally worn garments like girdles.

Symptoms

Symptoms of CVD include aching, swelling, numbness, tiredness, restlessness, burning, throbbing, tingling, or heaviness in the legs. The appearance of thin blue, red, or purple lines that can branch out depending on the severity of the blood flow restriction is an indication of dilated veins called 'spider veins'. Large, swollen, and bulging blood vessels that can be seen through the skin are called varicose veins.

Pain caused by varicose and spider veins is usually relieved by elevating the legs. But without effective treatment, they can worsen over time and lead to more severe conditions, such as sores, rashes, or skin ulcers, and severe venous insufficiency that could cause deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism. Compression therapy has proven to be an effective source of treatment for CDV that can help alleviate aching and loosen constriction between the vein walls.

The painful swelling, non-healing wounds, and continuous discomfort can decrease your mobility and your quality of life. Remember, once you notice any symptoms, it's imperative to have an appropriate diagnosis and a treatment plan in order to reduce the risk of developing more dangerous, often life-threatening conditions, such as Deep Vein Thrombosis. If you suffer from lymphedema or CVD and are looking for an efficient and safe treatment, you might want to consider Compression Therapy. The benefits may exceed your expectations!

Compression Therapy

Compression Therapy, also called "Wave Massage" in Europe, uses pressure cuffs (or sleeves) with a peristaltic compression pump that compresses in a rhythmical, wavelike cycle -- similar to the normally functioning lymphatic and circulatory systems.

During the therapy, the limb is surrounded by an inflatable cuff with several chambers, which are inflated sequentially so that there is a wave of compression travelling up the limb. The chambers inflate in the direction from foot to thigh in short bursts and either remain inflated until the end of the cycle or get deflated depending on the program selected for the treatment of a particular condition. Different settings of pressure and duration can be chosen to fit the needs and comfort of each individual.

The effects of this wavelike compression technique have been astonishing. Besides the evident benefits on the lymphatic and circulatory systems, it has shown promising results in stimulating the immune system, strengthening the connective tissue, improving digestion, accelerating detoxification, fat and cellulite reduction, and more.

Remember, any sign of swelling is the indication of an underlying problem! If you have questions about Compression Therapy or about lymphedema, CVD, or other health concerns, you may find the answers at the Salt Cave!

SOURCES:

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