Queensland Health

Compression garments for adults with lymphoedema: Eligibility, supply and costing

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Queensland Government

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An electronic version of this document is available at www.health.qld.gov.au/ahwac.

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1 Background

Queensland Health provides compression garments for the treatment of lymphoedema to eligible Queensland residents free of charge as part of the Compression Garment Scheme (the Scheme).

The Scheme is administered at the statewide level by the Office of the Chief Allied Health Officer (OCAHO) and implemented in Queensland Health services by Hospital and Health Services (HHS) to support the provision of compression garments to eligible Queensland residents with lymphoedema.

General information regarding this guideline and the eligibility criteria is available on the OCAHO webpage and should be made easily available to adults with lymphoedema by the HHS.

2 Purpose

The Compression Garments for Lymphoedema: Eligibility, supply and costing guideline (the Guideline) provides information and recommendations for HHSs regarding eligibility criteria, payment responsibilities and data collection within the Queensland Health Compression Garment.

These guidelines have been developed in consultation with HHSs, private providers and people with lymphoedema who have or will interact with this guideline.

3 Scope

The Guideline applies to all HHS (facilities and clinicians) for the prescription and supply of compression garments and to non-Queensland Health private providers as a reference for accessing compression garments through the Scheme.

The Guideline details the recommended minimum requirements that HHSs should apply to support equitable access for compression garments across Queensland.

The Guideline does not provide advice regarding the clinical care of clients with lymphoedema, beyond the selection and supply of compression garments.

4 Human Rights

Queensland Health must act and make decisions compatible with human rights, in accordance with *The Human Rights Act 2019* (the Act). This includes applying the Guideline and administering the Compression Garment Scheme in accordance with the Act.

5 Definition of terms

Term	Definition	Source
Accredited lymphoedema practitioner	Practitioners/ clinicians who have been formally recognised by the Australasian Lymphology Association (ALA) as being appropriately skilled and qualified. This includes having acquired an appropriate level of lymphoedema education and professional competence, meeting expectations with respect to professional indemnity insurance cover, demonstrate suitable professional standing (by holding registration where applicable, or – where registration is not mandated - being a member of a professional association which has robust complaints and disciplinary processes), demonstrate recency of practice and comply with the Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner Program (ALPP) ALPP Code of Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice. ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioners that meet the ALPP entry and ongoing requirements are included on the National Lymphoedema Practitioners Register.	Australasian Lymphology Association, 2024.
Clinical prescription	A written description of specific parameters of compression garment style, class, fit and fabric size for the purpose of sourcing through a supplier/vendor.	Queensland Health, 2024
Episode of care	In the context of this document, means the client has a current episode of care for lymphoedema in a Queensland Health facility. An episode of care is a phase of treatment. An episode of care ends when the principal clinical intent changes or when the client is formally separated from the facility. An episode of care for lymphoedema may include comprehensive lymphoedema assessment and interventions such as bandaging, massage, LASER and exercise programs. This care should be led by a lymphoedema therapist. However, the specific service model used to deliver this care is determined by each Hospital and Health Service with due regard to clinical governance, quality and safety.	
Lymphoedema	Lymphoedema is the accumulation of excessive amounts of protein-rich (lymphatic) fluid resulting in swelling of one or more regions of the body. This is due to a mechanical failure of the lymphatic system and occurs when the demand for lymphatic drainage exceeds the capacity of the lymphatic circulation. The condition usually affects the limb(s) although it may also involve the trunk, breast, head and neck or genital area. The diagnosis of lymphoedema requires exclusion of any other cause and/or may require identification through lymphoscintigraphy (L/S/G). In cases where a lymphoedema diagnosis is not clear, evaluation by a specialist medical practitioner in the field and treatment of the primary condition is recommended so that treatment is fully optimised. Compression should be seen as a supportive measure and one component in the management of lymphoedema.	Australasian Lymphology Association, 2024

Term	Definition	Source
Medical Compression Garments	The pressure applied to an area of the body by the recoil of an elastic garment, or the tension applied when donning an adjustable garment. This compression pressure is transmitted to an underlying tissues and vessels and can be measured and expressed in mm of mercury of pressure (mmHG).	S.T.R.I.D.E. Professional Guide to Compression Garment Selection for the Lower Extremity, 2019

6 Facilities

6.1 Local intake process

Each HHS is responsible for determining the local HHS intake process and communicating this to the public, including how consumers can access the Scheme and the associated requirements. For example, through a general practitioner or other health practitioner referral (public or private), self- referral, or transfer of care following discharge from a cancer centre.

6.1.1 Transfer of care between services

If a client is transferred or referred from one HHS or facility to another (e.g., moving residence or transfer from an acute facility to an outpatient service), the HHS or facility transferring care should complete and document a referral process. This referral should include details of the most recent medical referral and diagnosis, the most recent garment prescription and details of previous garments provided.

A clinician in the receiving facility should review the client at an interval negotiated with or documented by the referring clinician.

6.2 Costs

The patient's primary HHS where they reside (their primary residential address) is responsible for the cost of garments provided under the Scheme, including if a client requires an episode of care for lymphoedema away from their local HHS, for example if they are receiving cancer treatment in another location and it is more convenient to access lymphoedema care in the same facility, or of they do not have stable lymphoedema/ require more intensive or complex care than can be provided at local services.

7 Eligibility

The Scheme is implemented independently in each HHS, as such, extension of the eligibility criteria and determination of local compression garment provision arrangements for clients that do not meet all the eligibility criteria is at the HHSs discretion.

The HHS is responsible for ensuring individual patients are eligible and continue remain eligible to receive compression garments under the Scheme, within their own established local procedures.

7.1 Patient eligibility

To be (and remain) eligible for compression garments as part of the Scheme, the patient must meet all the following criteria:

- have a formal diagnosis of lymphoedema documented (in a referral letter from a general practitioner, prescription/ order form, or a Queensland Health medical record) by an eligible health practitioner (refer to section 7.2),
- be aged 16 years or older,
- be a permanent resident of Queensland,
- be covered by a current Pensioner Concession Card issued by Services Australia (refer to www.servicesaustralia.gov.au)

  OR
- Health Care Card issued by Services Australia, including as a listed dependent (refer to www.servicesaustralia.gov.au)
- enrolled in Medicare (evidenced by the Medicare Card with the name of the applicant)

  OR
- hold a Permanent Protection Visa, Humanitarian Visa or be an asylum seeker (Subclass 866 Protection visa (homeaffairs.gov.au).

7.1.1 Ineligible patients

Patients are not eligible for compression garments under the Scheme in the following circumstances:

- when admitted as a public or private hospital in-patient where the admission is related to their lymphoedema treatment
- when the applicant is eligible to receive appropriate assistance for compression garments for lymphoedema under one or more other state or federally funded programs including (but not limited to):
  - WorkCover
  - the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) when the compression garment for lymphoedema is fully subsidised by the NDIS
  - National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS)
- where the cost of the compression garment for lymphoedema is fully subsidised through the patient's third-party insurance (including health insurance or other relevant insurances).

The HHS may determine local compression garment provision arrangements for clients that do not meet all patient eligibility criteria above, including the number of garments provided based on clinical need, or the type of concessions accepted based on financial needs of the clients.

Patients who are ineligible to receive a compression garment free of charge under the Scheme are not excluded from accessing and receiving other lymphoedema related services within the HHS, including lymphoedema assessment, assessment for compression garment, therapeutic intervention, prescription, fitting, and problem solving for self-funded garments.

7.2 Eligible Prescribers

To be eligible to prescribe compression garments for lymphoedema under this Scheme, health practitioners must hold:

1. An undergraduate and/or post-graduate qualification in a relevant health discipline (occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech pathology or podiatry), and

2. Registration with the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) (for professions included in the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (Queensland) 2009 - physiotherapy, podiatry or occupational therapy)

   OR

   Eligibility for membership with Speech Pathology Australia (for speech pathologists).

3. Satisfy the following qualification and/or training requirements in one of three ways:
   a) be an Australian Lymphology Association Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner on the National Lymphoedema Practitioners Register

      OR

   b) eligible to register as an ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner, including meeting the following:
      i. successful completion of foundational level training module plus relevant regional module/s accredited by the ALA (previously referred to as Level 1 Lymphoedema Training)

         AND

      ii. recency of practice by demonstration of clinical experience in compression garment prescription within the previous two years

         AND

      iii. continued professional development of 40 points in the previous two years, as set out in the ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner Program Continuing Professional Development Policy

   OR

   c) Successfully complete the Queensland Health Compression garment, selection, fitting, and monitoring education package on iLearn with the support of a lymphoedema therapist, including use of telehealth, implementation resources and governance processes, and recency of practice in lymphoedema management and prescription of compression garments.

7.2.1 Non-Queensland Health prescribers

Clinical prescriptions for compression garments for lymphoedema from non-Queensland Health HHS providers shall be accepted if the client and prescriber eligibility criteria are

met. Non-Queensland Health HHS providers are to send the prescription/order form to consumer's closest, local service to be processed according to the HHS's intake process.

8 Prescription and supply

8.1 Prescribing compression garments

Prior to prescription for a compression garment, a comprehensive lymphoedema assessment should be undertaken by the client's treating health practitioner (who is appropriately skilled, trained and experienced in the diagnosis and management of lymphoedema) to develop a comprehensive lymphoedema treatment plan.

A comprehensive lymphoedema assessment is distinct from the assessment conducted by an eligible health practitioner for the prescription of a compression garment.

Once the patient has undergone a comprehensive lymphoedema assessment and compression garments have been identified as appropriate treatment and documented in the patient's comprehensive lymphoedema treatment plan, an eligible practitioner may then undertake an assessment for the prescription of a compression garment.

Prescribers of compression garments under the Scheme are responsible for:

4. maintaining their own eligibility as a prescriber under the Scheme, as per Section 7.2 of this Guideline
5. confirming initial and ongoing eligibility and appropriateness of the client for supply of compression garments under the Scheme
6. Undertaking the initial and ongoing assessments for a compression garment and prescribing the most cost-effective and clinically appropriate compression garment to meet the client's needs
7. ordering and supplying compression garments only where there is a documented diagnosis and current clinical prescription
8. providing education to the applicant regarding the process of receiving the compression garment (e.g., timeframes), the appropriate fitting and maintenance of the compression garment (e.g., donning and doffing, cleaning) and any associated additional treatment requirements
9. completion of relevant documentation, including the ordering, clinical records, HHS, and Department of Health data inputs and reporting as required.

8.1.1 Assessment for prescription of a compression garment

Assessment for compression garments includes a process of subjective and objective information gathering for the purpose of decision-making regarding the sourcing and supply of a compression garment. Assessment should include:

- history taking with a focus on the signs and symptoms of lymphoedema and changes since the previous supply of a garment (if applicable)
- an objective assessment of the affected limb including circumferential measurements using a standardised measurement process
- the presence of contra-indications and precautions

- documentation or client reports related to tolerance or issues with current garment.

The assessment process and components of compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring is described in more detail in the Compression garment, selection, fitting and monitoring education package available at: https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login.

8.1.2 Prescription and supply of appropriate compression garments

Eligible patients may be prescribed Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved medical compression garment/s.

In order to manage costs and maximise the efficient use of compression garment resources for the community, the following principles should be adhered to with the prescription and supply of compression garments within the Scheme:

- All clinicians providing a prescription should preference the selection of a ready to wear (off the shelf) garment.
- In circumstances that a ready to wear garment is not clinically indicated or is unlikely to provide the desired intervention goal, a custom-made compression garment may be prescribed
- Where the fitting of a standard garment is not appropriate (due to shape, difficulty with donning or doffing or poor tolerance), an adjustable compression device (wrap) or night-time garment may be considered based on clinical need
- Eligible patients are entitled to two garments per body part in a single supply process
- Replacement garments should be prescribed based on review of clinical need. If required, two replacement garments per body part may be provided every six months under the Scheme.

The type, number and frequency of supply of compression garments is at the ultimate discretion of the HHS and all internal HHS approval processes must be followed.

8.1.3 Ordering and supply

If a patient meets the necessary criteria for the supply of compression garments under the Scheme (referred to in this guideline or otherwise stated by the HHS), garment(s) may be ordered using the HHS's usual procurement and ordering processes, which may include the use of the clinical prescription/ order form for compression garments.

All private/ non-Queensland Health providers who are ordering compression garments through the HHS must use the clinical prescription/ order form.

Where possible and in the first instance, compression garments should be ordered from a Queensland Health approved distributor, this could include through the current relevant Queensland Health Medical Consumables Price Agreement (QMCPA) or Standing Offer Arrangement (SOA) supplier list. However, if a suitable garment that meets the clinical needs of the patient is not a Queensland Health approved distributor or available on the relevant QHMCPA or SOA, a compression garment may be ordered in accordance with local HHS processes and approval.

The ordering and supply of compression garments must be based on a prescription no more than 6 months old and reflect a recent assessment undertaken by an eligible practitioner.

Supply of the compression garment to the client by the local service will not be influenced by whether the client has a current episode of care in the department supplying the garment or with another provider.

Supplying the sourced compression garment to the client may include providing the garment directly to the client as part of a clinical consultation undertaken in a HHS, or providing the garment directly to the referring non-Queensland Health service provider.

8.2 Retrospective reimbursement of funding

Compression garments provided outside of the Scheme, including by ineligible clinicians or prior to patient eligibility being determined will not be reimbursed.

9 Data collection and record keeping

9.1 Compression Garment Data Collection Tool

HHS clinicians and other HHS staff that process compression garment orders (from clinicians internal and external to the HHS) are responsible for entering deidentified data for each compression garment supplied through the Scheme by their facility in the Compression Garment Data Collection Tool on a timely basis. This includes prescriptions received from private/ non-Queensland Health Prescribers (including Mater Health Services). This is to enable the Queensland Department of Health to allocate funding and meet the requirements of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing under the National Partnership Agreement.

Information on the reporting process is available on the OCAHO QHEPS page: https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/alliedhealth.

9.2 Privacy Statement

Queensland Health collects administrative, demographic, and clinical data as part of the prescription/ ordering process, in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2009 and Health Services Act 1991, to assess the applicant's eligibility for fully subsidised compression garments for the treatment of lymphoedema.

The information will be accessed by Queensland Health officers. Some of this information may be given to the applicant's carer or guardian; other government departments who provide associated services; the prescribing health professional for further clinical management purposes; and to those parties (commercial suppliers, repairers) requiring the information for the purpose of providing garments and services.

The applicant's information will not be given to any other person or organisation except where required by law. If the information provided in the application is not complete or accurate, Queensland Health may not be able to properly assess the applications.

If any details change, or if the applicant finds the personal information Queensland Health holds is inaccurate, the applicant must contact Queensland Health (via the prescribing clinician or team) to ensure reasonable steps are taken to ensure the information is correct.

Queensland Health has a long-standing commitment to ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of person information collected by the department.

Refer to Queensland Health's global privacy statement: Privacy | Queensland Health

Document approval details

Document custodian and approval officer

Chief Allied Health Officer, Office of the Chief Allied Health Officer, Clinical Excellence Queensland.

Version Control

Version	Date	Prepared by	Comments
1	23/4/2013	OCAHO	N/a
2	24/04/2016	OCAHO	The amendments include: • inclusion of physiotherapists and occupational therapists who have completed the compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring education package as clinicians who provide compression garment care. • describing the compression garment service model that involves compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring provided by generalist occupational therapists and physiotherapists. • updating links and forms, including the prescription/order form.
3	24/08/2017	OCAHO	The amendments include: • expanding the eligibility criteria to include all adult clients diagnosed with lymphoedema (malignancy and non-malignancy related lymphoedema). • inclusion of Queensland Health podiatrists who have completed the Compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring education package as eligible providers of compression garment care. • inclusion of non-Queensland Health physiotherapists, occupational therapists and podiatrists who have completed the Compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring education package as clinicians who can provide compression garment care.

Version	Date	Prepared by	Comments
4	21/06/2021	OCAHO	The amendments include: • alignment to the latest evidence and clinical practice standards • inclusion of wraps and night-time garments as available provisions • clarifying statements to support understanding of eligibility criteria

5	24/10/2024	OCAHO	The amendments include:
			• Consolidation of the current Procedure and Guideline.
			• Inclusion of:
			  ○ clarifying information regarding eligibility of patients and professionals
			  ○ suitable compression garments and types of compression garments available to prescribe.
			  ○ data collection and privacy requirements.