

# Compression garments for adults with lymphoedema: eligibility, supply and costing

## Queensland Health Guideline

QH-GDL-373:2014

## 1. Purpose

This Guideline provides recommendations regarding eligibility criteria and payment responsibilities for the provision of compression garments to adult clients with lymphoedema.

## 2. Scope

This Guideline applies to all Hospital and Health Services (HHSs). It specifically applies to HHS clinicians who prescribe compression garments to adults with lymphoedema and the facilities which provide these garments and/or which are responsible for the payments of these garments.

## 3. Related documents

### Education package

Compression garment, selection, fitting and monitoring education package  
<https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login>

### Forms, templates

- [Standing Offer Arrangement: compression garments](#)
- [Clinical prescription / order form for compression garments](#)

### Accreditation references

- [Australian Government. Cancer Council. 2013 Lymphoedema – what you need to know](#)
- [Australasian Lymphology Association \(ALA\) position paper on Compression Garments for Lymphoedema](#)
- [Compression Therapy: A position document: International Lymphoedema Framework 2012](#)
- [EWMA Position Document “Understanding Compression Therapy”](#)
- [Indications for medical compression stockings in venous and lymphatic disorders: An evidence-based consensus statement. Phlebology](#)
- [Lymphoedema Framework. Best Practice for the Management of Lymphoedema. International consensus. London: MEP Ltd, 2006](#)
- [National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre. 2008. Review of research evidence on secondary lymphoedema: incidence prevention, risk factors and treatment.](#)
- [Professional guide to compression garment selection for the lower extremity](#)
- [Template for practice: Compression hosiery in lymphoedema. 2009](#)
- [The Australasian Lymphology Association 2021. What is Lymphoedema?](#)

- [The Diagnosis and Treatment of Peripheral Lymphedema: 2020 Consensus Document of the International Society of Lymphology](#)
- [Wounds UK: Best Practice Statement for compression hosiery](#)

## Register

The Australasian Lymphoedema Association's [\(ALA\) Accredited Practitioner](#)

# 4. Guideline for compression garments for adults with lymphoedema: eligibility, supply and costing

## Eligibility to receive compression garments free of charge

Clients meeting all of the following criteria should be provided with compression garments free of charge:

- a diagnosis of lymphoedema has been documented by a medical practitioner or lymphoedema therapist. The diagnosis should be documented in a referral letter, prescription/order form or a Queensland Health medical record.
- aged 16 years or over
- outpatient or day hospital patient
- holding one of the following cards:
  - Centrelink Pensioner Card
  - Centrelink Health Care Card
- permanent resident of Queensland
- Medicare eligible.

Clients will be entitled to a maximum of two garments (per body part), in a single supply process and provided with a replacement time period of no less than six months. Replacement garments should be provided based on review of clinical need.

The HHS may determine local compression garment provision arrangements for clients not meeting all of the above criteria. The HHS may make decisions about the number of garments provided based on clinical need, or the type of concessions accepted based on financial need of the clients.

Ineligibility for free garment provision does not exclude clients from accessing other services from a HHS including lymphoedema assessment, assessment for compression garment, therapy intervention, prescription, fitting and problem solving for self-funded garments.

## Clinical prescription of compression garments

Compression garments should only be provided to clients where there is a documented clinical prescription.

As good clinical practice, and for the purposes of determining eligibility as per section 4, clinical prescriptions for compression garments should be made by a clinician who provides compression garment care. This requirement relates to health professionals employed in any context including HHSs, non-government agencies and private practice.

All clinicians providing a prescription should preference the selection of a ready to wear 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 garment can be prescribed. Where the fitting of a standard garment is not appropriate (due to shape, difficulty with donning or doffing or poor tolerance), a wrap or night-time garment can be considered based on clinical need. The intent of these principles is to manage costs and maximise the efficient use of compression garment resources for the community.

Replacement garments should be prescribed based on review of clinical need.

### Transfer of care between services

The HHS within which the client resides (their primary residential address) should meet the cost of prescribed compression garments provided to eligible outpatient clients.

For eligible clients, the compression garment should be provided, where possible, by the facility, within the client’s HHS and closest to the client’s residence.

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. Where available, this referral should include details of the most recent medical referral and diagnosis, the most recent garment prescription and details of the garments provided.

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

### Supporting process in the HHS

The Compression Garment Selection, Fitting and Monitoring Services Model should be implemented in local services to support access and provision of service.

General information regarding this Guideline and the eligibility criteria should be made easily available to adults with lymphoedema by the HHS.

## 5. Definitions

Term	Definition / Explanation / Details	Source
<b>Assessment for compression garment</b>	Means undertaking a process of subjective and objective information gathering for the purpose of decision-making regarding the sourcing and supply of a compression garment. The minimum components of the assessment for compression garment are described in Compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring education resource,	<a href="#">Adapted from Guidelines for writing clinical task instructions, 2014</a> Queensland Health. 2014. Compression garment, selection,

Term	Definition / Explanation / Details	Source
	<p>Section 1: Assessment Module and includes history taking with a focus on changes in signs and symptoms since the previous supply of a garment including the presence of contra-indications and precautions, information in the clinical prescription and client reports of tolerance/issues with current garment, and an objective assessment of the affected limb including circumferential measurements using a standardised measurement process.</p> <p>NOTE: A comprehensive lymphoedema assessment by a lymphoedema therapist should form part of an episode of care for lymphoedema. An assessment for compression garment is not the same as a comprehensive lymphoedema assessment undertaken for the purpose of diagnosis and development of a comprehensive lymphoedema intervention plan.</p>	<p>fitting and monitoring education package (at <a href="https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login">https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login</a>)</p>
<b>Clinical prescription</b>	<p>Means a written description of specific parameters of compression garment style, class, fit and fabric size for the purpose of sourcing through a supplier/vendor. The prescription order form <a href="http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ahwac/html/compression.asp">http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ahwac/html/compression.asp</a> may be used for this purpose or for compression garment provision.</p> <p>Clinical prescriptions for compression garments should be made by appropriately trained and experienced clinicians who provide compression garment care (including public and private sector practitioners) as defined below.</p> <p>Clinical prescriptions should be for ready to wear garments unless custom-made garments are clinically indicated.</p> <p>All providers are responsible for providing prescriptions that are current.</p> <p>Garments are available in various compression levels to meet the needs of different clients and can be ordered via manufacturers and suppliers under Standing Offer Arrangement (SOA).</p> <p><a href="http://qcd.govnet.qld.gov.au/Pages/Details.aspx?RecID=1245">http://qcd.govnet.qld.gov.au/Pages/Details.aspx?RecID=1245</a></p>	<p>Queensland Health, Compression Garment Steering Group</p>

Term	Definition / Explanation / Details	Source
<p><b>Clinician who provides compression garment care</b></p>	<p>A clinician who meets the professional and training eligibility criteria as detailed below:</p> <p><b>Professional eligibility criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queensland Health physiotherapist, occupational therapist or podiatrist registered with Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-governmental, community service organisation or private practitioner physiotherapist, occupational therapist, podiatrist registered nurse or medical doctor registered with Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).</li> </ul> <p><b>Training eligibility criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds Level 1 lymphoedema training certificate or Foundational module plus relevant regional module/s accredited by the Australasian Lymphology Association (ALA), <b>and</b></li> <li>• Eligible to register as an ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner, with recency of practice by demonstration of clinical experience in compression garment prescription within the previous two years, <b>and</b></li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed the Compression garment, selection, fitting and monitoring education package <a href="https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login">https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login</a> with the support of a lymphoedema therapist including use of telehealth, implementation resources and governance processes.</li> </ul>	<p>Queensland Health, Compression Garment Steering Group</p>
<p><b>Compression Garment Selection, Fitting and Monitoring Services Model</b></p>	<p>The Compression Garment Selection, Fitting and Monitoring Service Model (“the service model”) involves compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring provided by occupational therapists, physiotherapists and podiatrists who have not completed a formal lymphoedema training program (i.e. Level 1 or 2 course), or Foundational module plus relevant regional module/s accredited by the</p>	<p>Queensland Health (2015). <a href="#">The Compression Garment Selection, Fitting and Monitoring Project for Malignancy related</a></p>

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	<p>ALA but have completed, the Compression garment, selection, fitting and monitoring education program <a href="https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login">https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login</a> with professional support of lymphoedema therapists, supported by telehealth (where relevant), implementation resources and governance processes. The service model includes a training model that pairs occupational therapists, physiotherapists and podiatrists with a lymphoedema therapist. The online education program covering pathophysiology, assessment and management of lymphoedema, compression garment prescription, monitoring and care accompanies one-on-one coaching sessions.</p> <p>Telehealth can be used to support the supervised practice stage of the training program and can be used if required in the post-training phase if the physiotherapist, occupational therapist or podiatrist requires professional support from their lymphoedema therapist coach. Therapists who have completed this package can undertake compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring for clients with stable lymphoedema.</p>	<p><a href="#">Lymphoedema Project Completion Report</a></p>
<b>Compression garments</b>	<p>Compression garments are firmly fitting elastic garments which can help to reduce the swelling associated with lymphoedema. Garments will be prescribed and replaced at the discretion of the treating therapist. It is recommended that they be replaced every 6 months (2 per affected body part).</p>	<p>Queensland Health, Compression Garment Steering Group</p>
<b>Custom made compression garments</b>	<p>Also referred to as ‘made to measure’, these garments are made to the specifications of the client. These garments are more expensive than ready to wear garments and may take from 5 days to 4 weeks to be manufactured and delivered.</p>	<p>Queensland Health, Compression Garment Steering Group</p>
<b>Lymphoedema</b>	<p>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</p>	<p>Australasian Lymphology Association</p>

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	<p>may also involve the trunk, breast, head and neck or genital area.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Compression should be seen as a supportive measure and one component in the management of lymphoedema.</p>	
<b>Lymphoedema assessment</b>	<p>A comprehensive lymphoedema assessment by a therapist who has completed a Level 1 or 2 course or Foundational module plus relevant regional module/s accredited by the Australasian Lymphology Association and is eligible to register as an Accredited ALA Lymphoedema Practitioner should form part of an episode of care for lymphoedema. An assessment for compression garment is not the same as a comprehensive lymphoedema assessment undertaken for the purpose of diagnosis and development of a comprehensive lymphoedema intervention plan.</p>	<p>Queensland Health. 2021. Compression garment, selection, fitting and monitoring education package (at <a href="https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login">https://ilearn.health.qld.gov.au/d2l/login</a>)</p>
<b>Lymphoedema therapist</b>	<p>Clinicians who meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holders of Level 1 Lymphoedema Training Certificate or Foundational module plus relevant regional module accredited by the Australasian Lymphology Association (ALA), <b>and</b></li> <li>• Eligible to register as an ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner, with recency of practice by demonstration of clinical experience in compression garment prescription within the previous two years, <b>and</b></li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<p>The Australasian Lymphology Association's Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner Program 2020</p>
<b>Ready to wear compression garments</b>	<p>Also referred to as 'off the shelf', these garments are available in a fixed range of sizes and suitable for most clients in the management of lymphoedema.</p>	<p>Queensland Health, Compression Garment Steering Group</p>

Term	Definition / Explanation / Details	Source
	All prescribers should prescribe ready-to-wear garments as a first preference, where the clinician considers the ready-to-wear option to provide the same or better treatment effect to a custom-made garment.	

## 6. Document approval details

### Document custodian

Director, Allied Health Professions' Office of Queensland, Clinical Excellence Division.

### Approval officer

Liza-Jane McBride, Chief Allied Health Officer, Allied Health Professions' Office of Queensland, Clinical Excellence Division.

Approval date: 28 July 2021

## Version control

Version	Date	Prepared by	Comments
1	23/4/2013	AHPOQ	
2	24/04/2016	AHPOQ	<p>The amendments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>describing the compression garment service model that involves compression garment selection, fitting and monitoring provided by generalist occupational therapists and physiotherapists.</li> <li>updating links and forms, including the prescription/order form.</li> </ul>
3	24/08/2017	AHPOQ	<p>The amendments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expanding the eligibility criteria to include all adult clients diagnosed with lymphoedema (malignancy and non-malignancy related lymphoedema).</li> <li>inclusion of Queensland Health podiatrists who have completed the Compression garment selection, fitting</li> </ul>



Version	Date	Prepared by	Comments
			<p>and monitoring education package as eligible providers of compression garment care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
4	21/06/2021	AHPOQ	<p>The amendments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>alignment to the latest evidence and clinical practice standards</li> <li>inclusion of wraps and night-time garments as available provisions</li> <li>clarifying statements to support understanding of eligibility criteria</li> </ul>