

# What is Lipoedema? (Lipalgia Syndrome)

Lipoedema (lipalgia syndrome) is a chronic fat and connective tissue condition mostly affecting the lower body. Excessive fat builds up (symmetrically) in legs, hips, bottom and sometimes arms, it is distinct from obesity but frequently co-exists. It may be inherited and triggered by female hormone changes (puberty, pregnancy, contraceptive or menopause). Having lipoedema negatively impacts mobility, physical and mental wellbeing.

## Symptoms

People with lipoedema have a disproportionately large lower body and often a relatively small waist. Common symptoms include:

- Large legs, hips, buttocks, and sometimes arms, sparing feet and hands;
- Lumpy fat and 'bulging' fat at knees, hips or ankles;
- Affected tissue is painful, tender and uncomfortable;
- Excessive and unexplained bruising of affected areas;
- 'Heavy legs' and changes in leg shape can inhibit walking;
- Symptoms can worsen during the day, after activity or in hot weather.



## Good compression helps

Good diet and exercise can help manage lipoedema and slow its progression.

Compression that fits well can help manage symptoms. People wear compression to feel supported, reduce pain, improve their mobility and appearance.

Compression garments are available on prescription, most commonly: tights, leggings, socks, stockings and arm sleeves.

Compression helps some, but not all, people with lipoedema. Before prescribing compression, ask the patient to try compressive sports or yoga leggings to check how well they tolerate tight garments.

## Finding the right compression

Brands have different sizes of ready-made and made-to-order garments and different measuring methods. Made-to-measure (custom) garments are also available. Compression garments must fit well to be useful, a good fit requires accurate measurement. Please refer patients to a specialist for measurement, where possible. The most prescribed brands (survey of 373 people with lipoedema) are shown below. Their representatives are keen to train you/your staff to measure:

Compression Brand	Contact details for advice/ measurement training
Jobst	Stewart.gilmour@essity.com
Juzo	Elizabeth.plenderleith@juzo.co.uk
Medi UK (Mediven)	Lynda.douglas@mediuk.co.uk Lynsey.young@mediuk.co.uk
Haddenham Healthcare	Margaret.morrison@hadhealth.com
Lipoelastic (Active)	Info@lipoelastic.co.uk (Sonia)
Sigvaris	Lucy.johnson@sigvaris.com Nicola.brown@sigvaris.com

\*Other compression brands are available\*

## Problems with compression

Over 20% of prescribed compression is never worn due to poor fit or bad design.

The most common problems include: garments falling down; garments digging in at edges or bunching behind the knees, causing tourniquet in some cases; inability to don garments; some fabrics too hot for summer use.

Some trial and error may be needed to find the right garment. However, accurate measurement can improve fit, comfort and treatment success.

When effective compression is found stick with it!

More information is available here:

