

Finding the Right Lymphatic Support

A guide to Manual Lymphatic Support (MLD) in the UK

This short guide is for anyone seeking lymphatic support—particularly after surgery, cancer treatment, lymph node removal, or when swelling feels present but hasn't been fully explained.

Lymphatic work can be deeply supportive when it's matched appropriately to your body and your medical history. Not all lymphatic treatments are the same, and not all training prepares a practitioner to work safely with a compromised lymphatic system.

Why this matters

The lymphatic system plays a vital role in fluid balance, immune health, and healing. When it has been affected by surgery, radiotherapy, scarring, or infection, it may need specialist care.

With NHS services understandably under significant pressure, many people sit in a grey area— not unwell enough for ongoing treatment, but still needing informed, proactive support.

This guide is here to help you ask clear, appropriate questions so you can make informed choices.

Key questions to ask before you book

- What Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) training have you completed?
- How many hours was the training?
- How much of your training was in-person?
- Which professional bodies recognise your training?
- Do you have experience working with post-surgical or oncology clients?
- Are you insured specifically for MLD?
- Do you have a referral network when needed?
- Are you listed with MLD UK or another recognised professional body



Understanding different types of lymphatic work

Lymphatic-related training sits at very different levels. Each has its place—what matters is the the training matches the clinical need.

Aesthetic or wellness lymphatic treatments:

Often shorter courses focused on relaxation, cosmetic outcomes, or temporary puffiness. These may be appropriate for people with healthy, intact lymphatic systems, but are not designed for post-surgical or oncology-related care. You may find treatments with tools like bamboo offered.

Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD):

Recognised MLD training involves extensive study, detailed anatomy and pathology, clinical reasoning, supervised practice and assessment. This level of training allows some therapists to adapt treatment safely when the lymphatic system has been compromised.

Have you checked in with your GP or Local lymphoedema clinic for guidance, or been advised whether specialist lymphatic support would be appropriate for you?

Advanced Lymphoedema-focused training:

Some practitioners complete further specialist training to assess and manage lymphoedema. This may include compression therapy, skin care, exercise, and self management education, often alongside medical teams.

Machine-based lymphatic drainage:

Machine-based lymphatic treatments (such as compression boots or sleeves) are increasingly available. They may be appropriate for some people with healthy lymphatic systems, or when prescribed and supervised within specialist lymphoedema services.

For those who have had lymph nodes removed, radiotherapy, cancer treatment, or on-going unexplained swelling, individual assessment and manual clinical reasoning remain important.

MLD UK - provides list of medically recognised practitioners.

The British Lymphology Society - supports best practice

FHT - has a list of recognised trainings for the beauty industry

