

Massage - Manual Lymph Drainage

Manual Lymph Drainage (also referred to as simply MLD) is a very gentle type of massage therapy used to drain excess fluid from the body and improve the overall functioning of the lymphatic (immune) system. MLD is most commonly used to treat Lymphedema, which is characterized by the blockage of lymph nodes in the arms and legs.

[Lymphatic massage](#) and [manual lymph drainage](#) are both based on the belief that the lymph glands, which play a key role in a healthy immune system, can be manipulated through massage, thereby improving their function. The former method entails a combination of deep, [shiatsu](#)-style pressure and more gentle relaxation methods, while the latter is a circular technique applied in gentle strokes in the direction of the heart.

MLD originated in Europe during the 1930s. It was first used on patients as an effective way to detoxify (ridding of waste) the body. Today, MLD is still used as a way to improve the inner workings of the lymphatic system. The massage is applied gently in the direction of lymph flow in order to unblock any obstructed lymph vessels, and allow lymph flow to transport waste from the body freely.

MLD massage is performed by a certified MLD massage therapist, who applies a light form of circular massage to their clients' skin. MLD massages must be applied to bare skin, and no massage oils or lotions can be used in order for the treatment to be effective. MLD massage is applied in gentle strokes towards the heart. This technique will lightly stretch the walls of the lymph vessels and encourage lymph drainage.

During your MLD treatment your massage therapist may use one of four very effective MLD techniques to encourage lymph drainage:

Stationary Circles these strokes are applied in continuous spirals with the massage therapists fingertips typically over the neck, face and lymphatic nodes.

The Pump Technique the massage therapist will place their palms down on the skin, and make oval strokes with their fingers and thumbs to encourage lymph flow.

The Rotary Technique the therapist massages the skin in circular motions with their palms facing down. The wrists are used to apply and lessen the stroke pressure.

Scoop Strokes the massage therapists palms will face up, and their fingers remain outstretched so that their hands are cupped to resemble a scoop. Twisting strokes are applied to the clients' skin to encourage waste disposal.

Lymphatic Massage

The massage works by working with the body's own lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is responsible for immune system regulation and fluid and waste removal. It is what helps rid the body of any toxins that may cause illness. When the lymphatic system slows

down or becomes blocked, then fluids begin to build up, causing the whole body to feel tired and heavy, making us susceptible to catching sicknesses.

By stimulating the lymph nodes through massage, it helps to clear any blockages and gives the lymphatic system a boost keeping it running healthy and strong. This in turn keeps your body free of toxins and illness and while also creating a stronger immune system.

A lymphatic massage session begins with a consultation between the therapist and client to discuss the client's specific needs and how many sessions will be needed. The actual massage consists of gentle pressured and pumping movements towards the direction of the lymph nodes throughout the body. The procedure uses the deep thumb pressure of shiatsu combined with the relaxing techniques of the Swedish massage. Depending on whether the therapist is focused on only one specific area or is working on the entire body, a session can last anywhere between half an hour to two hours in length.

Lymphatic massage is an excellent treatment on its own or when used in combination with other massage techniques such as deep tissue or [Swedish massage](#). Since it consists of only soft, rhythmic motion, the technique can be used on even the gentlest of areas including areas of the body that are swollen.

The massage is good for individuals who frequently suffer from illnesses, a faulty immune system, sports injuries, depression and emotional problems, [stress](#), and low energy. It has been shown to have positive effects on the skin, to produce energy, and to help with respiratory problems. The treatment boosts the immune system making it easier to fight off disease and creates general feelings of vitality. It can also help the client deal with different types of pain because it evokes the body's innate healing mechanisms. The main idea behind lymphatic massage is that when our immune system is healthy, we are also strong and healthy.

Manual Lymphatic Drainage - Vodder Method

Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) is a fast growing area of massage – and one that uses the lightest of touch. It takes time to master this light touch and so the training is in three parts, each module usually separated by a month or more in order for the student to practise. Courses are only open to those who have already qualified and practised in another bodywork field. Adelia at the Amber Health, Beauty and Sports Injury Clinic was trained in the Vodder method by a Vodder qualified teacher.

MLD is an advanced massage technique which moves the skin over the underlying tissues using repetitive and circular movements. Dr. Emil and Estrid Vodder discovered and then developed the technique in the 1920's and 1930's, going on to train others in the late 1940's. They then worked with, and set up schools with, the Wittlingers in Austria (The Vodder Schule), Casley-Smith in Australia and Asdonk and Foeldi in Germany. These groups in their turn have trained therapists and teachers since the 1950's.

The Lymphatic system was described around 1654 as "A system which purifies the body and regulates irritation, swelling and oedema." (Thomas Bartholin) By specifically stimulating the

minute musculature of the lymph vessel walls an MLD Therapist uses the lymph system itself to cleanse the body, reduce any swelling and strengthen the immune system.

Described as "One of the best kept secrets on the health and beauty scene." (Jane Alexander, Daily Mail Saturday) , MLD's intensely relaxing effect masks the strength of the treatment itself. I have been quoted time and again for saying that an MLD facial is like a facelift without surgery and so it is. As the stimulated lymph vessels go to work clearing the loose connective tissue of accumulated excess cells and debris, the skin not only looks clearer and cleaner – it actually is clearer and cleaner, right down to the sub-coetaneous levels.

As no oils or powders are used it is completely safe even for those with sensitive skin. This non-invasive technique simply uses the muscles and structure of the existing lymphatics to clear accumulated fluid. For anyone who has clients going through a detox or weight loss programme MLD is invaluable for its ability to safely remove excess `debris' from all over the body and to help tighten the skin.

Taken further, it eases the swelling/ inflammation caused by everything from more vigorous treatments, trauma from accidents and on to surgical intervention. As a pre and then post Operation treatment it is unparalleled in its ability to ease most - and usually all - of the tissue swelling associated with trauma and surgery and so speed the healing rate of damaged structures.

MLD's role as one of the cornerstones of CDT (Complex (or Combined) Decongestive Therapy) for lymph oedema and lip oedema comes as no surprise to those who understand the lymph system's amazing ability to regulate swelling and fluid imbalance. It is a vital part of lymph oedema treatment, opening up alternative avenues for the dispersal of excess fluid and avoiding the areas affected by lymphatic malfunction.

MLD also has an effect similar to the tens machine in pain control. In reducing the swelling, promoting healing and reducing pain, MLD becomes one the most effective treatments for any trauma, however caused.

It is one of the safest massages available to women who are pregnant. MLD uses no oils or powders so absolutely nothing is being introduced to upset the developing foetus. From top to toe there is no need whatsoever for a pregnant woman to suffer swollen anything.

MLD has a strong effect on the immune system. By decongesting the `transit stretch' of loose connective tissue – clearing out any lingering debris – and making the whole transport system more efficient, MLD helps quicken the transport system of our bodies immune response.