



Lymphoedema Department

Photobiomodulation Therapy

This leaflet explains what photobiomodulation (PBM) is, how it works and how it can be used in the treatment and management of lymphoedema.

What is PBM and how does it work?

PBM is the application of red LED light over the skin. This encourages the uptake of oxygen within the cells. PBM targets individual cells that are not working correctly and re-energises them to work more effectively. In patients with lymphoedema, where the skin and underlying tissues may have become firm, the light can help to soften the skin and underlying tissue and promote fluid uptake into the lymphatics. It can help reduce the volume of fluid, break down scar and thickened tissue and increase range of motion.

What happens during treatment?

The PBM device will be placed directly on your skin. Several areas of the skin will be treated for 1 minute on each point. Depending on the size of the area needing treatment, the length of treatment time will vary from between 5 and 20 minutes.

What will it feel like?

PBM does not hurt, and most people do not feel anything, you can sometimes feel a slight warmth.

How often do I need to attend?

This will depend if PBM is used alongside other lymphoedema treatments, for example medical taping, [elastic tape applied to the skin](#) or as part of intensive treatment (compression bandaging). It may be weekly, or 2 or 3 times per week, for a minimum of 2 – 3 weeks but can be longer. The number of appointments and length of time you will need to attend the clinic will be discussed with you.

How long does it take to work?

Some people have reported that they have been aware of some softening of the skin and underlying tissue soon after the first treatment. Most commonly people report a gradual improvement over a few weeks or longer.

Does PBM work for everyone?

Everyone responds differently to different aspects of lymphoedema management, and this includes PBM therapy. Your Lymphoedema Nurse will assess and monitor your response to this treatment and discontinue it if not effective.

Will I have other treatments at the same time?

PBM is often used as part of a combined treatment programme. This may include skin care, exercise, compression garments or bandages, self-lymphatic drainage, (a massage technique), or medical taping.

If you have any further questions before, during or after your treatment, please do not hesitate to contact your Lymphoedema Nurse.

Contact Numbers:

We hope that you have found this information useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to the following Dorset County Hospital Staff:

Lymphoedema Nurses:	Emma Diaz	01305 255370
	Dawn Johnston	
	Lucy Harris	

Useful Websites:

1. The Lymphoedema Support Network Tel: 020 7351 4480

Website: www.lymphoedema.org/lqn

2. British Lymphology Society Tel: 01452 790178

Website: www.lymphoedema.org/bls

About this leaflet:

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email

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