

# Contraindications for Lymphedema Treatment

## General contraindications for Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD)

- **Cardiac edema:** there is no therapeutic benefit of MLD/CDT in the treatment of swellings caused by decompensated cardiac insufficiency. If cardiac edema is combined with lymphedema, MLD may be indicated, but cardiac and pulmonary functions need to be closely monitored by the physician.
- **Renal failure**
- **Acute infections:** the application of MLD may exacerbate the symptoms.
- **Acute bronchitis:** the parasympathetic effect of MLD may exacerbate the symptoms in the acute phase by producing contractions of the smooth bronchial musculature.
- **Acute deep vein thrombosis:** MLD/CDT is contraindicated on the affected extremity and the abdominal area.
- **Malignancies:** close cooperation with the referring physician is necessary. MLD/CDT may be indicated as palliative treatment. To date there is no scientific evidence that the application of MLD (or other manual treatment techniques) would accelerate the spread of malignant cells to other parts of the body or contribute to the growth of malignant tumors.
- **Bronchial asthma:** because of the parasympathetic stimulation, MLD may cause the onset of an asthma attack. In lymphedema patients with a combined diagnosis of bronchial asthma, MLD generally can be applied safely if the treatment time is incrementally increased, starting at 20 minutes of initial treatment time. If no negative reactions are noted during or after the therapy, the treatment time may be increased by 5 to 10 minutes until reaching normal treatment time values.
- **Hypertension:** MLD/CDT may be applied if cardiac functions are monitored.

## Local contraindications on the neck include the following:

- **Carotid-sinus syndrome:** hypersensitivity of pressure receptors on the carotid bifurcation may cause cardiac arrhythmia
- **Hyperthyroidism:** manipulation on the neck may accelerate the release of thyroid hormones and/or medications into the blood.
- **Age:** with patients over 60 years of age, there may be an increased risk of atherosclerosis in the neck arteries.

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### Local contraindications for the abdominal area include the following:

- Pregnancy
- Dysmenorrhea
- Ileus
- Diverticulosis
- Aortic aneurysm (also palpation of strong aortic pulse)
- Recent abdominal surgery
- Deep vein thrombosis
- Inflammatory conditions of the small and large intestines: Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, diverticulitis
- Radiation fibrosis, radiation cystitis, radiation colitis
- Unexplained pain

## Massage and Lymphedema

### Contraindications:

Massage to the quadrant area where one or more lymph nodes have been removed.

- Swedish, moderate or deep tissue
- Myofascial work, Rolfing
- Adjacent areas may also be at risk if redirection of lymph fluid is required.
- Radiated (radiation) areas w/ no lymph node removal are also at risk
- Hot packs
- Hot stone massage

**Please check with your Lymphedema Therapist before receiving any of the above.**