

# Manual Lymphatic Drainage: Defined & Explained

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# Objectives

- Define MLD and its origins in therapy
- How MLD should look during therapy
- Demonstrate self MLD for home care
- How to find a CLT/MLD therapist
- Q & A



## Definition

- Developed by Emil and Astrid Vodder in 1932 “lymph drainage massage”.
- Manipulated swollen lymph nodes of his patients with chronic colds and sinus infections



## Definition cont.

- Gentle, effective techniques used to activate lymphatic system, especially when its functional abilities are reduced due to surgery, radiation therapy, injuries, or illness
- 4 techniques used: stationary circle, pump, rotary, scoop
- Working phase and resting phase which you can feel when done correctly



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Empowering Patients:  
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TREATMENT SYMPOSIUM



- Working phase- serves to move fluid in the appropriate direction
- Pressure- tissue dependent: strong enough to stretch the skin to its elastic capacity, gentle enough to not cause redness
- MLD is used as a part of CDT for the treatment of Lymphedema: includes compression bandaging, exercise, garment measuring and fitting, skin care
- Can be used in isolation for other conditions



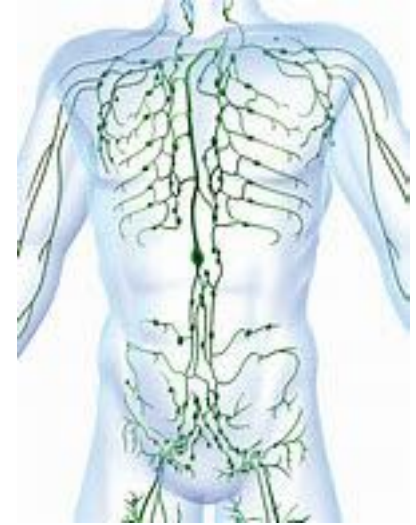
# Why We Use MLD

- Lymphedema
- Injury edema (ankle sprains, soft tissue injuries)
- Post surgical edema (face lifts, breast reduction/enhancements, total joint replacements)
- Oncology settings (post surgical, edema reduction, pain control, constipation, relaxation, improve sleep, stress reduction)
- Other conditions such as auto immune disorders, head colds, headaches/migraines, fibromyalgia, arthritis, etc.



# Why We Use MLD, cont.

- Analgesic effects
- Calming of the sympathetic nervous system
- Relaxation
- Desensitization of surgical scars and radiated tissues



# What is MLD? Not a Massage!



- Not a “massage”
- Massage: “to knead”- from the Greek masso/massain. Used to describe techniques used to treat ailments in muscle tissues, tendons & ligaments- to achieve a desired effect.
- firm pressure





# MLD

- MLD is gentle & designed to have an effect on fluid & lymphatic structures right under the surface of the skin.
- There are different theories and techniques that the various schools use to teach therapists how to perform MLD.
- We, therapists, adapt our techniques to each person depending on presentation (fibrosis, fragile skin, irritated skin, young, old, etc.)



# What should it look like?

Good MLD:

- Maximum skin contact
- appropriate stretching of tissues
- Sufficient pressure
- “Intent and Purpose”



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# Considerations

- Acute DVT (Deep Venous Thrombosis)
- Active infection
- Recent radiation
- Recent abdominal surgery
- Active tumor sites
- Implantable devices (ports, pacemakers, drains)



# Environment

- Calm
- Quiet
- Dimly lit
- Gentle music
- No interruptions



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# Activity

- Deep abdominal breathing
- Recent studies show effectiveness of MLD using ICG (Indocyanine Green) where we can visualize how our techniques are working and where fluid is moving. (Koelmeyer, et al 2021)



# How To Find a Therapist

- [lymphnet.org](http://lymphnet.org) (National Lymphedema Network)
- [klosetraining.com](http://klosetraining.com)
- [nortonschool.com](http://nortonschool.com)
- [CLT-lana.org](http://CLT-lana.org) (Lymphology Association of North America)
  
- Ask your doctor (Oncologist, surgeon, primary) for a prescription prior to making an appointment for therapy.



# References

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