



KATIE BRINDLE

Lymph Disorders Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



What is Lipoedema and Lymphoedema?

The two main Lymph disorders are known as Lipoedema and Lymphoedema. A third condition, known as Lipo-Lymphoedema, can also occur. Lipoedema and Lymphoedema have similarities, but they are not the same:

Lipoedema

This is a long-term disorder of fat metabolism and distribution, resulting in an abnormal accumulation of fat cells around the legs, thighs, buttocks and sometimes the arms. The condition is far more prevalent in women and will often start during puberty, or other times of hormonal change such as pregnancy, the menopause, or following certain medical treatments. Lipoedema can be painful if banged or scraped, however gently, and the skin can bruise very easily. There can be a feeling of heaviness or tenderness in the affected limbs, and in severe cases joint problems or difficulty in walking comfortably can occur, which makes it an extremely debilitating condition, both mentally and physically, sometimes leaving the sufferer anxious or depressed.

You can tell the difference between accumulated fat associated with Lipoedema and normal fat gained through overeating or lack of exercise, by how it feels. Lipoedema fat is swollen, soft, and dimpled with an orange peel texture – often described as feeling like little pearls or bubbles under the skin. It is usually cool to the touch and will not pit (indent) if pressed. Normal fat, developed as a result of being overweight, will be smooth with a rubbery texture but does not necessarily have any swelling or dimpling. The common condition of Cellulite, however, will appear dimpled with an orange peel texture, but will not be swollen. (See my Cellulite Guide for advice on this condition). Lipoedema is not caused by being overweight – you can be a normal weight and still develop the condition – although eating a balanced diet and maintaining a healthy weight is advised to prevent the uncomfortable symptoms worsening.

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Lymphoedema

This is a condition where swelling occurs when the lymphatic system fails to efficiently drain the tissues, leading to an excess and accumulation of lymph fluid. It can affect any part of the body but is most commonly experienced in the lower legs, feet or arms. Initially, swelling will come and go, becoming worse during the day and reducing overnight. However, if left unchecked the condition may become more severe and persistent. There are two main types of this condition: Primary Lymphoedema which results from faulty genes and is relatively rare, and Secondary Lymphoedema which results from problems with the lymphatic system. It is this type which is much more common and usually happens after injury, lack of movement, or after cancer treatment, where lymph nodes have been compromised or removed.

Lymphoedema presents itself differently to Lipoedema; the swollen skin will be hard and tight and will pit when pressed. Although the limbs may feel achy and heavy, there is generally no pain. In extreme cases, the accumulated lymph fluid may leak through the skin and skin infections can develop which, if severe, can potentially lead to Cellulitis - a bacterial infection of the deeper layer of skin (not to be confused with Cellulite).

Lipo-lymphoedema

Sufferers of Lipoedema are often prone to Lymphoedema too. This is because when there is abnormal fat and fluid accumulation the lymphatic system will struggle to work efficiently. This secondary, blended condition is known as Lipo-lymphoedema.

According to Chinese Medicine, the main underlying causes of lymph disorders are dampness in the body and an impaired lymphatic system. When tissues sense an accumulation of fluid there is an increase in both immune dysfunction and inflammation, which can then be exacerbated by chronic stress, compounding the problem further.

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What can you do to help yourself?

- Nurture and strengthen the Kidneys and Spleen & Stomach – As the Kidneys control fluid, and the Spleen & Stomach oversee the lymphatic and digestive systems, they play a pivotal role in managing lymph conditions. Look at why there may be imbalances and work towards rectifying them. Download my Organ Guides for advice.
- Meditation, breathwork and healing sounds – Remaining calm, with the stress response under control, will be invaluable in helping to control inflammation and dampness. Regular meditation, even taking a moment or two to perform some mindful breathing and bringing healing sounds into your daily practice, will help to keep the whole body balanced and calm. The sound for the Kidneys is “Chooo” and for the Spleen & Stomach, “Whoaa”. Consider using a gong app (try Mindfulness Bell) to remind yourself to regularly take time to focus on these techniques.
- Qigong – Gentle qigong practice, which works with the energetic pathways and corresponding organs, will help to harmonise the body as a whole. If movement is uncomfortable, begin by gently shaking the body and twisting at the waist. Many qigong movements can be performed sitting down, so consider joining our Wise Elders class which is ideal for people if they have mobility issues or find exercise uncomfortable.

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- Tapping and Drumming – Tapping and drumming the body daily will encourage the free flow of qi and blood, vital for healthy lymphatic and digestive systems. However, it is important not to tap or drum too hard over any area affected by lymph conditions as this can worsen the problem or cause discomfort. Instead, softly brush the tapper over the areas to gently stimulate energy flow. This is called “grain of sand” therapy.
- Lymph node removal – If lymph nodes have been removed due to cancer treatment, the remaining nodes will be under duress because they will be picking up the additional work, so it will be essential to support the overall system and ensure, especially, that the immune system is strong. Tapping will be especially beneficial but DO NOT tap, drum or gua sha over the direct area, such as under the arms.
- Nutrition – Eating mindfully will be of paramount importance in ensuring a healthy digestive system and reducing the incidence of dampness in the body. A nourishing and balanced diet, avoiding damp forming foods such as the “4 whites” – flour, dairy, salt and sugar – will help to nurture the Spleen & Stomach and reduce inflammation. Try to eat warm and easily digested foods, avoiding anything raw or cold, and avoid having ice in drinks.

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Contraindications

- Lipoedema and Lymphoedema are serious conditions – Consult your GP before practicing any of the Yang Sheng techniques suggested.
- Gua sha – This is NOT recommended for those suffering with Lipoedema or Lymphoedema as pressure on the affected area could cause pain and further problems. Manual massage can be beneficial, but this will need to be done by a qualified practitioner.
- Lymph node removal – If lymph nodes have been removed due to cancer treatment, avoid tapping or drumming over the direct area.

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Yang Sheng Techniques and Chinese Wisdom

Chinese medicine understands that Lipoedema and Lymphoedema result from disharmonies within the Kidneys and Spleen & Stomach, primarily resulting in dampness and a sluggish lymphatic system which allows the symptoms to manifest in the first place. The Spleen & Stomach oversee the lymphatic system as well as governing the transportation and transformation of nutrients within the body, so imbalances can compromise a healthy digestive system, resulting in the formation of damp. The Kidneys are the Water element of the body. There are two distinct types of Kidney qi – yang, which is in charge of giving us energy, and yin, which is in charge of body fluid management. It is a deficiency in Kidney yin qi which will influence the severity of lymph conditions.

For an in-depth lecture on how to support your Kidney energy, download Arron's "[Master the Water Element](#)" Masterclass, and join me for me [Qigong Healing](#), both on the Hayo'uFit platform.

There is a wealth of information in my book, "Yang Sheng – The Art of Chinese Self-Healing".

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Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey.

The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and www.hayoumethod.com

Buy Yang Sheng Book

Healing Movement classes (3 x each week) and live meditations for a more in-depth and healing practice – full details [here](#)

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health. Find more Healing Masterclasses [here](#).

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram & the opportunity to purchase the accompanying tools from www.hayoumethod.com

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit www.hayoumethod.com to view our comprehensive FAQs.

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