

MANUAL LYMPH DRAINAGE - MLD

Manual Lymph Drainage is a systemic series of precise hand movements that stimulate an increase in the normal functioning of the Lymphatic System. MLD promotes healthy connective tissue, enhances the body's immune system, relieves pain, and sedates the sympathetic nervous system. Thus MLD promotes the body's self-healing ability throughout many diverse diagnoses or traumas, eg: sports injuries, scar tissue, pre-and post-operative care as well as chronic inflammatory conditions such as acne, rosacea and many more.

Therapeutic Application of MLD

The therapeutic application of Manual Lymph Drainage is based on the diversity of its effects:

- It reduces edema through the lymph vessels by stimulating lymphangio-motoricity and venous blood capillaries, shunting the edema fluid (protein/water) in the ground substance across lymphatic anastomoses into functioning lymph vessels.
- It produces a calming effect in that it brings about a vegetative change by lowering the sympathetic tonus.
- It relieves pain.
- It relaxes the hypertonus of the skeletal muscles, normalizing the tone of the smooth muscle of the viscera and stimulating motility and lymphangio-motoricity.

Criteria Which Support the Action of MLD

1. The treatment room is kept at a comfortable temperature – covering those body parts that are not being treated.
2. The patient is placed in a comfortable position. This can be difficult when the patient has heavy edematous limbs.
3. Light and sounds are kept to a minimum so as not to disturb the patient counteracting the goal of the treatment.
4. The therapist's hands need to be warm – cold hands cannot promote lymph drainage.
5. MLD must not be painful. Pain increases the sympathetic tonus causing increased edema and spasm in the draining lymph vessels.
6. The force of the hand movements must feel pleasant. The strength of pressure depends on the tissue being treated and the patient's sensitivity.
7. Generally MLD must not cause reddening of the skin – this appears when pressure is too heavy.
8. No lubricants are used except when treatment is done in areas of the body covered with thick hair.
9. After MLD treatment there is a period of REST, usually 15 minutes. MLD can then continue to have an effect and blood pressure can return to normal.
10. The treatment of each illness follows the so-called THERAPY STROKES where the sequence of movements is matched to the particular symptoms and often combined with movements of the joints.
11. Duration of treatment is dependent upon the type and degree of the illness – with the initial treatment relatively short in duration. If “reactions” to the treatment are expected, the duration of the treatment in the first days will have to be short, then can be slowly increased.
12. The type of illness and the condition of the patient governs whether MLD begins with a 10-15 minute treatment as with asthmatics, or a 20-30 minute treatment.

Basic Principles

Proximal (closest) areas are treated before the distal (farthest) areas and the direction of movements are distal to proximal.

Pressure is limited to 30-40 mm/Hg. The pressure is changed smoothly so that a pumping action is produced in the tissue.

Direction of pressure depends on the efferent lymph vessels in the skin.

The pressure phase of each technique lasts longer than the relaxation phase.

The lymph draining action is in the hand.

The purpose of lymph drainage is to transport tissue fluid from various regions of the body to the neck region so that new, fresh lymph can flow into the tissues.

MLD has four different techniques: stationary circles, pump technique, scoop technique and rotary technique.

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