



# Home Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) for Lower Extremity

Provided by:

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Source: Lymphedema Management ( The Comprehensive Guide for Practitioners)

Joachim E. Zuther and Steve Norton 4th edition

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## Intro Message

Hi there!

This self-care guide is designed to support your lymphatic health at home. It follows the same gentle, effective techniques we use in clinic. These steps are especially helpful for lower extremity swelling and lymphedema management. Remember: all movements should be done **gently and slowly** with light skin-stretching pressure—never deep or forceful. If you feel discomfort or have any medical concerns, contact your healthcare provider or me directly. Now, let's move lymph! 💧

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## ◆ Preparation for MLD

- **Position:** Lie down in a **comfortable supine position** (on your back), with legs supported if needed.
  - **Pressure:** Use **light pressure** to stretch the skin slightly. The hand must not slide, only stretch.
  - **Motion:** Each technique involves **stationary circles**—a gentle stretch phase followed by full relaxation.
  - **Repetitions:** Repeat each stroke **5–7 times** before moving to the next placement.
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## ◆ Pretreatment: Stimulate Drainage Points

### 1. Supraclavicular Nodes (Collarbone area)

Place the fingers flat just above your collarbones on each side.

- Use the hand from the opposite side to reach across.
- Make slow, gentle **stationary circles**.
- Pressure is directed **toward the neck**.

## 2. Axillary Nodes (Underarm)

Place your flat hand into your armpit (same side).

- Make deep, gentle stationary circles into the axilla.

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## ◆ Trunk Drainage (Upper Quadrant Preparation)

### 3. Side Waist to Axilla

With a flat hand, start from your waist and move upward to your armpit.

- Do this on the **affected side only**. (Both legs for Lipedema clients)
- Make circles in **multiple placements** along the side of your trunk.

### 4. Inguinal Nodes – Unaffected Side (apply to Lymphedema only, but if you have lipedema, you must stimulate both inguinal)

Place a flat hand over your groin area (opposite side).

- The hand lies just below the inguinal ligament.
- Pressure is directed **toward the belly**.

### 5. Inguinal Nodes – Affected Side ( both sides for lipedema)

Repeat the same motion, now on the affected side.

- Do several placements, working from the hip inward.

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## ◆ Diaphragmatic Breathing

### 6. Belly Breathing to Stimulate Thoracic Duct Flow

- Place both hands flat on your belly.
  - **Inhale** deeply, allowing the belly to rise.
  - As you **exhale**, press your hands gently inward and upward (toward your chest).
  - Repeat **5 times**.
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## ◆ Leg Drainage Sequence

### 7. Effleurage (General leg drainage)

- Perform **long, gentle strokes** from your **ankles (or knees)** upward to your **waist**.
- Always stroke **toward the trunk** (see Fig. 5.252).
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### 8. Lateral Thigh and Hip

- Make stationary circles in **multiple spots** on the side of the thigh and hip
- Pressure is directed upward.(Fig. 5.253).
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### 9. Medial to Lateral Thigh

- Use both flat hands to make large circles from inner to outer thigh
- Work from the top of the thigh down toward the knee.(Fig. 5.254).
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### 10. Back of Knee (Popliteal Nodes)

- With flat fingers, make circles behind the knees (Fig. 5.255).

### 11. Medial Lower Leg (Inner shin)

- Use one or both hands to make circles between the **knee and ankle** on the inner leg (Fig. 5.256–257).
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### 12. Both Sides of Lower Leg

- Make circles with hands lying flat on **both sides** of the calf
- Pressure moves **up toward the thigh**.(Fig. 5.258).
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### 13. Foot

- Place fingers flat on the **top of the foot**.
- Make gentle circles toward the **ankles**.

### 14. Rework

- Repeat **steps 7, 8, and 12** as needed.
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## **Precautions for Lower Extremity Lymphedema**

- Do not walk barefoot.
  - Avoid cuts, scratches, mosquito bites, and nail injuries.
  - Use electric razors (not blades).
  - No injections or blood draws in the affected leg.
  - Avoid heat (hot tubs, saunas, hot showers above 102°F).
  - Avoid tight clothing, compression that restricts flow, or high-risk activities without consulting your therapist.
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## **Daily Tips**

### **Compression**

- Wear compression garments daily.
- Use rubber gloves when putting them on.
- Replace garments as recommended by your therapist.

### **Exercise**

- Gentle walking, swimming, or biking (low impact, short sessions).
- Avoid overexertion. Elevate legs when resting.
- Breathe deeply to stimulate central lymph flow.

### **Skin Care**

- Keep skin clean, moisturized, and dry.
- Avoid perfume-based lotions.
- Watch for cuts, rashes, redness, or fungal infections.

### **Nutrition**

- Maintain a healthy weight.
  - Follow a low-salt, high-fiber diet.
  - Avoid protein deficiency—it may worsen swelling.
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## **Need Help?**

If you have questions or want personalized care, schedule a session with:

**Criselda White, CLT, CMLDT, CLT/CDT**

 910 Quest Pkwy, Suite 6, Cedar Park, TX

 [www.movinglymphmotion.com](http://www.movinglymphmotion.com)

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 (512) 817-3008

*Please refer the step to the images below for more guidance*



Fig. 5.244 Stationary circles on the back of the hand.



**Fig. 5.246** Stationary circles in the axilla on the same side.



**Fig. 5.247** Stationary circles from the waist of the affected side to the axillary lymph nodes on the same side in several placements.



**Fig. 5.245** Stationary circles above the collarbones on each side.



Fig. 5.251 Diaphragmatic breathing: Exhalation.



Fig. 5.252 Effleurage on the leg.



**Fig. 5.250** Diaphragmatic breathing: Inhalation.

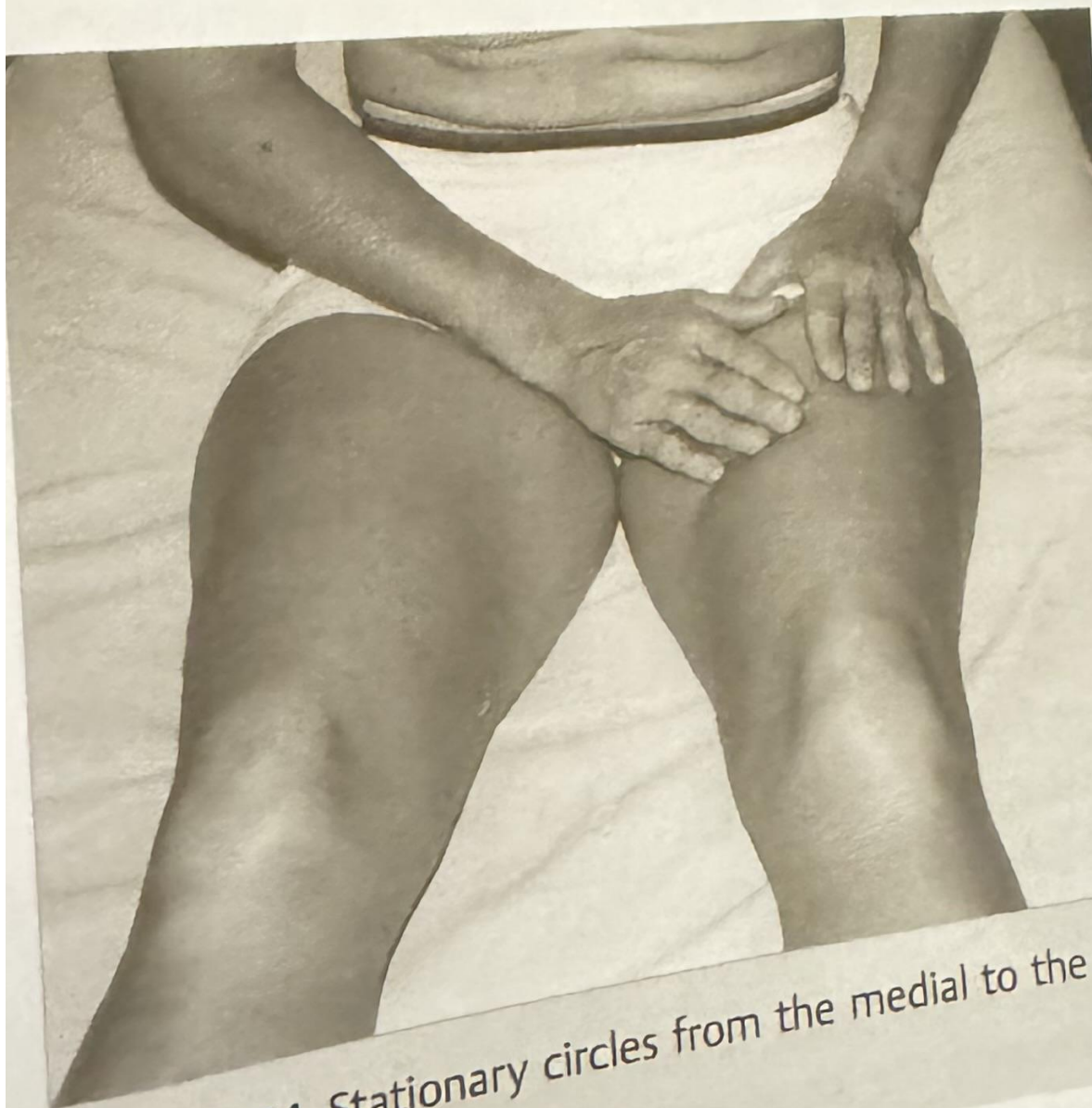


**Fig. 5.253** Stationary circles covering the lateral thigh and the hip in several placements.



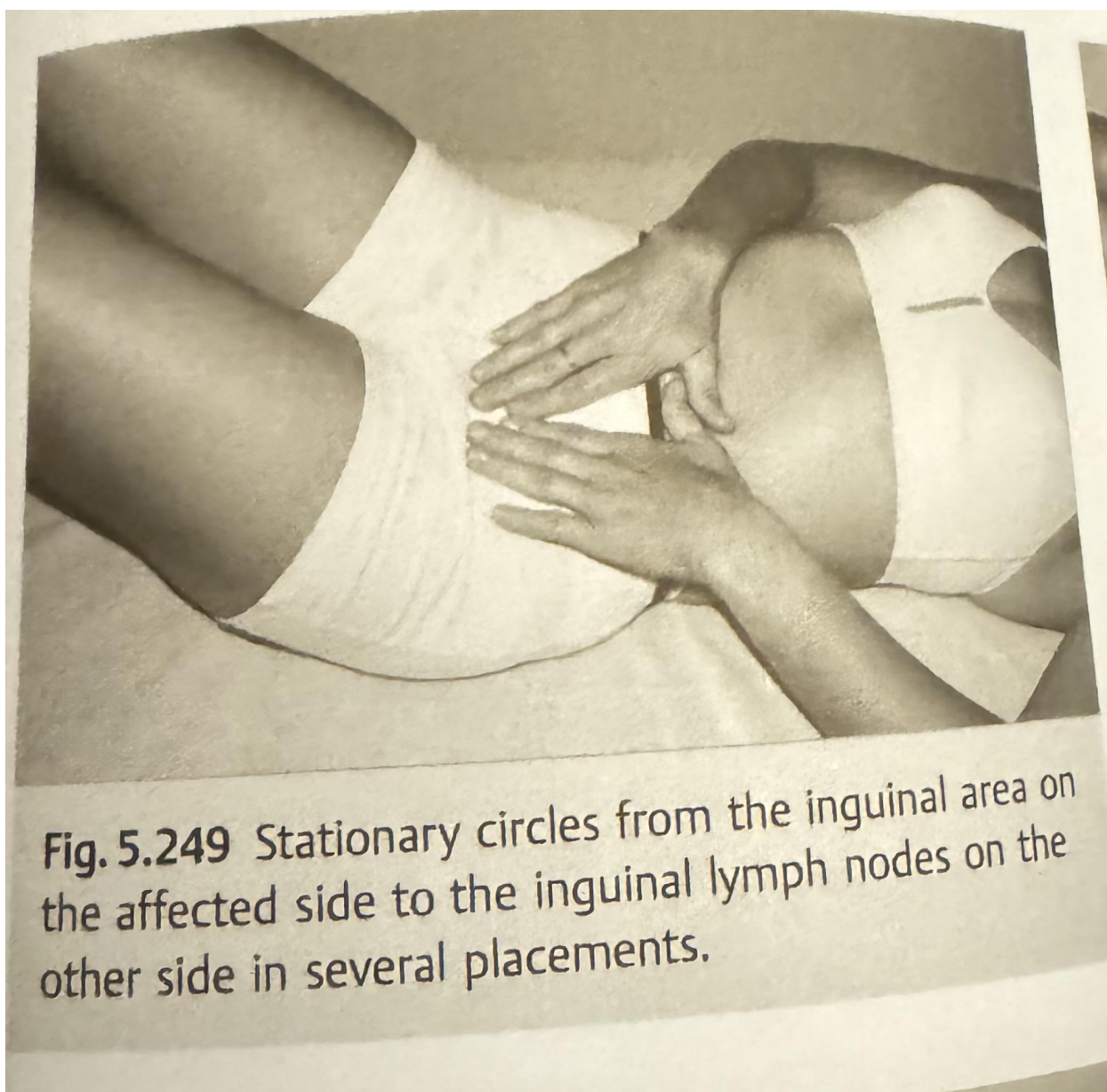
**Fig. 5.248** Stationary circles on the inguinal lymph nodes of the unaffected side.

If you have lipedema, you must treat both sides



**Fig. 5.254** Stationary circles from the medial to the lateral thigh.

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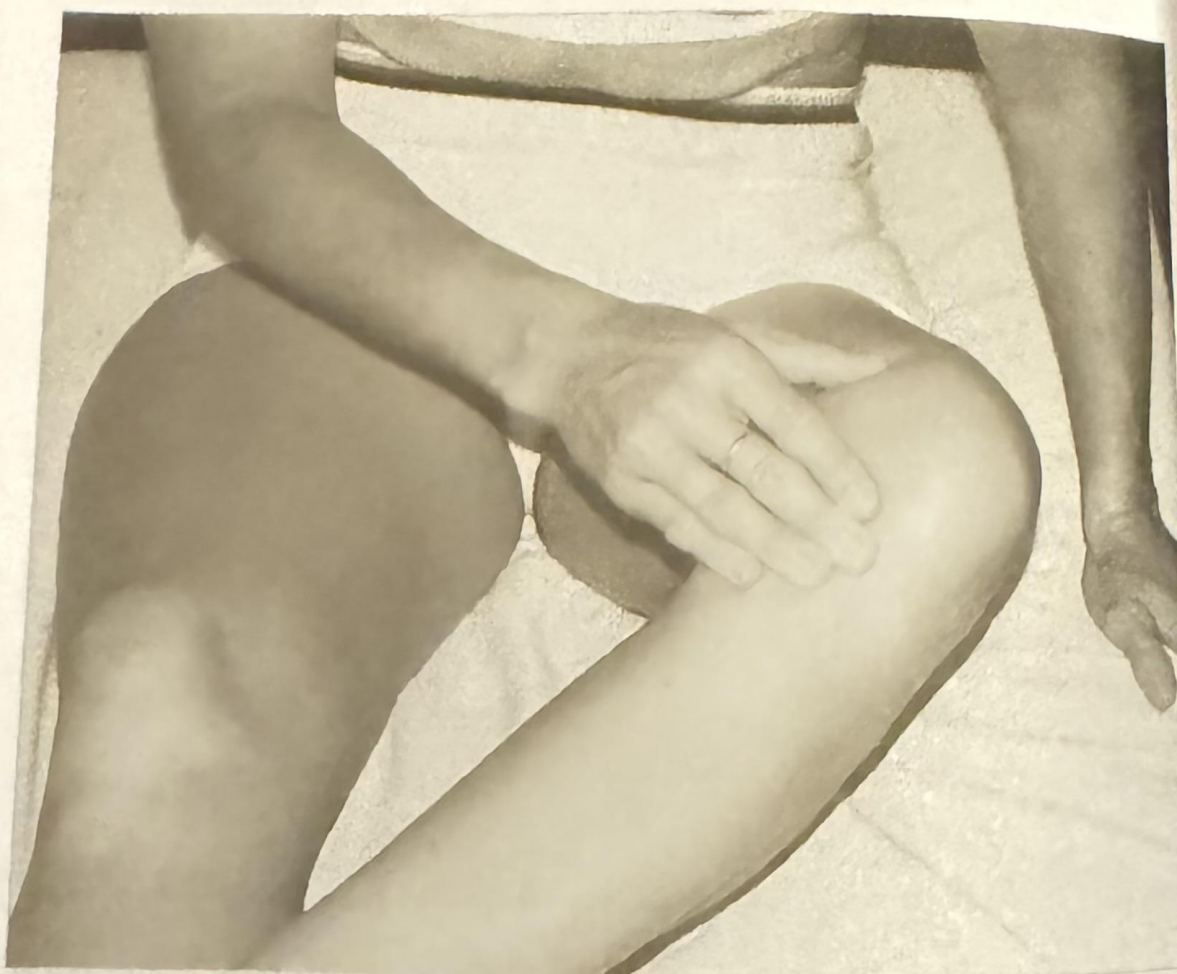
If you have lipedema, treat both legs



Fig. 5.255 Stationary circles behind the knee.



**Fig. 5.257** Stationary circles in several placements on the medial lower leg.



**Fig. 5.256** Stationary circles below the medial knee.



**Fig. 5.258** Stationary circles on both sides of the lower leg.