

Where to find help

Community organizations are an excellent resource

By Anna Kennedy

Q I have recently been diagnosed with lymphedema and find it a challenge to find support and resources from my health professionals. Where can I get the help and answers I need?

A It is unfortunate that there are still many health professionals who are not familiar with lymphedema and the treatment that can help alleviate some of the symptoms associated with this condition. It is important to know that there are provincial associations whose sole mandate is to support patients living with lymphedema and their caregivers. Most of these associations are led by individuals who have personal experience living with lymphedema. They are an excellent source for you to access where the fitters, therapists and clinics are near you that can help. Most of them organize educational events such as conferences or support groups. Some of them can also connect you to someone with a similar experience who can give you



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hope that things will change. A list of these organizations and their websites are listed on this page.

Q Why can't I get this help from my health professional team?

A In Canada, the average time that a medical professional receives in their four years of training is 15 minutes on the lymphatic vascular system. There are many other competing diseases and conditions that don't quite make the cut as well. Therefore it is unfair to wrongly judge your family physician or nurse practitioner. Instead, it is up to the Canadian Lymphedema Framework, provincial patient organizations and certified lymphedema therapists to raise awareness and advocate for change. Sharing this magazine with your family health practitioner is one way of doing that.

Q I've heard about manual lymphatic drainage and want to know where I can obtain this treatment?

A Although there are many people who may offer manual lymphatic drainage, it is very important that you only see someone

who has been certified according to the Canadian Lymphedema Framework's standards for training. These lymphedema experts have all received a minimum of 135 hours of post graduate training on the lymphatic system from a school that is approved by LANA standards. A list of certified lymphedema therapists can be found by contacting your provincial lymphedema association. Manual lymphatic drainage is only one of the components of lymphedema care they can provide. They will teach you the importance of compression bandaging and garments, exercises you can do at home and important skin care. **LP**



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HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you would like to have a question answered by an experienced lymphedema health professional, please contact us via email:

canadalymph@live.ca

Be sure to put "Ask The Expert" in your subject line.

You Are Not Alone

You have access to information, resources, contacts and support from people who know what you're going through from their own personal experience. You have the following organizations on your side.

	Alberta: Alberta Lymphedema Association	www.albertalymphedema.com
	British Columbia: BC Lymphedema Association	www.bclymph.org
	Manitoba: Lymphedema Association of Manitoba	www.lymphmanitoba.ca
	Ontario: Lymphedema Association of Ontario	www.lymphontario.ca
	Quebec: Lymphedema Association of Quebec	www.infolympho.ca
	Saskatchewan: Lymphedema Association of Saskatchewan Inc.	www.sasklymph.ca