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# When to Replace Your Compression Garment for Lymphedema: A Comprehensive Guide

## Introduction

Compression garments are vital to managing lymphedema, providing the necessary pressure to reduce swelling and maintain lymphatic flow. However, like any medical device, compression garments have a lifespan, and knowing when to replace them is crucial for effective treatment. Here's what you need to know to ensure your garment always works at its best.

## Signs It's Time to Replace Your Compression Garment

**Loss of Compression Effectiveness:** Over time, the elasticity of your compression garment can degrade, leading to reduced pressure on the affected area. If you notice your garment feels looser or isn't providing the same level of support as when it was new, it may be time for a replacement. Adequate compression is critical to managing lymphedema, and a garment that has lost its elasticity will be less beneficial.

**Visible Wear and Tear:** Regular use and washing can cause visible signs of wear, such as thinning fabric, frayed edges, or even small tears. Any damage to the garment can compromise its ability to provide uniform compression, making it less effective in controlling your symptoms. If you spot any signs of damage, it's wise to replace the garment immediately.

**Changes in Fit:** Significant weight loss or gain, or changes in the shape of the affected limb, can alter how your compression garment fits. If the garment no longer fits snugly and comfortably, it won't provide the necessary support. Additionally, if you feel discomfort or the garment is causing skin irritation, it might be time for a new one.

**Frequent Slipping:** A well-fitting compression garment should stay in place throughout the day. If your garment starts to slip or bunch up, it indicates that it has stretched out or lost its shape. Frequent adjustments during wear can lead to inconsistent pressure and reduced effectiveness.

**Exceeding the Recommended Usage Period:** Most compression garments are designed to last three to six months, depending on the manufacturer and how often they are worn. After this period, the material may start to break down, even if there are no visible signs of wear. Following the recommended replacement schedule ensures optimal compression and treatment effectiveness.

## How to Extend the Life of Your Compression Garment

Proper care is essential to get the most out of your compression garment:

- **Wash Regularly:** Hand wash your garment with mild detergent and cold water after each use to maintain its elasticity and cleanliness. Avoid using bleach or fabric softeners, as they can damage the fibers.
- **Air Dry:** Always air dry your compression garment away from direct sunlight or heat sources. High heat can degrade the elastic fibers more quickly.
- **Rotate Garments:** Have multiple garments to rotate throughout the week to give each one time to return to its original shape between wears and extend their overall lifespan.

## Conclusion

Monitoring the condition of your compression garment is essential for managing lymphedema effectively. By being aware of the signs of wear and tear and following the recommended replacement schedule, you can ensure that your garment continues to provide the support you need. Remember, your comfort and health are worth the investment in a new compression garment when the time comes.



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