

## MODERN DAY COMPRESSION GARMENTS

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*Jeannette Zucker holds a clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy from New York University. She received her lymphedema certification from Klose Norton School of Lymphatic Therapy in 2002 and started her career at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in 2003. In 2004, Jeannette assisted with the establishment of the lymphedema therapy program at the main campus and as the Lymphedema Clinical Specialist she continues to work on further developing the service to promote the awareness, early diagnosis and risk minimization of lymphedema. She leads the support groups for patients who have, and are at risk, for lymphedema through the Post-Treatment Resource Program.*

*Jeannette received her LANA certification in 2005 and was awarded the Susan G. Komen Conference scholarship by the National Lymphedema Network (NLN) in 2006. In 2007, she helped to develop the Lower Extremity Lymphedema Prevention Program for MSKCC and joined the Scientific Committee of the NLN. She continues to serve on the committee and provide lectures at the biennial NLN Conferences. In 2009, Jeannette joined the faculty of the Norton School of Lymphatic Therapy. In 2010 she joined the editorial board of the NLN's electronic newsletter E-Channel. Her current focus on treatment intervention is edema management regardless of etiology, scar management, and improving facial mobility and skin mobility through manual lymphatic drainage, myofascial release, compression therapy, kinesiotaping and laser therapy.*

“Colors, like features, follow the changes of the emotions.” Pablo Picasso

Although my specialty is lymphedema therapy, my treatment philosophy has evolved to guide patients along a healing path so that each individual can actualize their health potential on multiple levels: certainly physical, but also emotional, spiritual, and energetic. That is I do not limit my view and interventions to just the part of the body that is affected with swelling. Rather, I take a couple of steps back and look at the entire patient.

A series of questions automatically goes through my mind whenever I treat: How are patients holding their bodies and what does it reveal about the inner self? What is the patients' general energy level and how can I empower them to elevate it if it's low? What is the patients' general appearance and what does it say about their specific needs?

Achieving maximal volumetric reduction is a relatively easy task for the experienced lymphedema therapist. Helping a patient undergo a transformation requires a little more love and care. But the interventions required to accomplish this need not be herculean in nature. It can be something as simple as adding color into patients' lives. And by this I mean educating



patients on the benefits of choosing color over skin-toned compression garments.

Compression garments are a necessary component to a patient's home program for managing lymphedema. It provides the needed support to the soft tissues so that lymph fluid does not re-accumulate. When the discussion regarding compression garments takes place, frequently patients express that they would like something inconspicuous, something as close to the color of their skin as possible.

In the past, there was no option and "medical-looking", skin-toned garments were the only choices available. However today there is a spectrum of colors and patterns that patients can choose from. I often tell patients that wearing the skin-toned garments often produces the undesired effect of drawing more negative attention to the part of their bodies that they are trying to conceal. People seem to have a keen eye for the attempt to mimic skin when indeed it is not skin. Color, however, has the opposite effect. People perceive colored fabric to be a part of your wardrobe, a fashion piece, something of your choosing.

Time and time again, the feedback that I get from patients is the same. They are grateful that I encouraged them to at least try a colored garment even if they insist on obtaining a skin-colored one. They experience how they elicit different reactions from people depending on which they choose to wear. Going back to Pablo Picasso's quote, having different colored compression garments affords you the ability to have your outward appearance accurately reflect the different emotions you feel day to day or to better achieve invisibility. My point being that you are in control. You can decide. Color can be the tool that you use to your advantage, a power that you wield as you see fit.

I think that having the ability to choose is an important concept to highlight. Why impose limitations unnecessarily on any aspect of life? If there are options, explore what's available to you and then you can decide afterwards whether or not it is for you. Alluding to Dr. Seuss, you may actually discover that you like "Green Eggs and Ham".

