

Measuring for Compression Arm Sleeves

Compression sleeves are the most important tool to ensure preservation and improvement of the therapeutic success achieved during treatment with Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT). To select the correct garment ([ready-made or custom made](#)), [compression level](#), and, if necessary, fastening systems, the patient's age, physical abilities (and limitations), lifestyle, type of lymphedema and any other conditions must be taken into consideration. It is necessary that a compression garment is chosen that meets the patient's individual needs.

Most manufacturers provide various styles of compression sleeves in a variety of sizes. Custom sleeves should be ordered if the extremity is either too large or too small for standard size garments.

Who should measure?

While it would be best that a trained individual with a thorough understanding of lymphedema and its implications takes the measurements (lymphedema therapist or certified fitter) and teach patients how to wear them properly, it is sometimes necessary that patients measure on their own if ready-made sleeves are acquired from an online retailer for example. If this is the case, the measurements should be taken by a friend, or spouse and the measurements should be written down on a notepad.

When should the measurements be taken?

At the end of the intensive phase of CDT (phase I), when the extremity is at its most reduced state. Ideally, the measurements should be taken early in the morning when the arm is smallest, at the end of a treatment or after the compression bandages have been removed.

How to measure

Sizing for medical compression sleeves is based on the circumferences at specific points and the length of the arm. Measurements are taken with a tape measure, which should be applied in a straight fashion; a twisted or crooked tape measure will result in inaccurate measurements. If a tape measure is unavailable, a string and a ruler may be used. The circumferential and length measurements can be taken with the string and the individual lengths of the string then measured with the ruler.



It is recommended to mark the arm with a non-permanent, non-toxic marker at each circumference measurement made. The length measurement is taken along the front of the arm between the respective circumference points. The individual measurements are then compared

with the sizing chart of the manufacturer of choice to determine size and length of the compression sleeve.

Measuring for a ready-made arm sleeve

Wrist Circumference



This is the point of greatest compression and therefore a very important point. Place the measuring tape at the narrowest part of the wrist, at the transition from the hand to the forearm and measure the circumference. Write this measurement down and label it as wrist measurement.

Elbow Circumference



Measure the largest part around the elbow with the arm slightly bent; the objective here is to get the largest measurement. Write this measurement down and label it as elbow measurement.

Upper Arm Circumference



This measurement is taken around the upper arm in the axillary fold. To determine the correct location of this point, it is often helpful to place a book into the arm pit area. The measuring point will be even with the top end of the book. Write this measurement down and label it as upper arm measurement.

Length Measurement



Measure the distance between the wrist circumference measuring point to the upper arm circumference point along the front of the arm.

This measurement determines the length of your arm - write it down. You can now compare your measurements with the sizing chart of the manufacturer of your choice to determine the size and length of your sleeve.

If an additional compression gauntlet is required, here is how to measure:

Measuring for a ready-made compression gauntlet with thumb stub (no finger swelling)

Wrist Circumference (same point already measured for sleeve)



This is the point of greatest compression and therefore a very important point. Place the measuring tape at the narrowest part of the wrist, at the transition from the hand to the forearm and measure the circumference. Write this measurement down and label it as wrist measurement.

Palm Circumference



Measure the width of the palm along the finger joints. Place the measuring tape around the palm with the palm up and the fingers slightly spread and measure the circumference. Write this measurement down and label it as palm measurement.

Length measurements are not required for standard sized compression gauntlets. You can now compare your measurements with the sizing chart of the manufacturer of your choice to determine the size of your gauntlet.

Picture credit in this post: Absolute Medical, Inc. www.absolutemedical.net

Additional Resources:

<http://www.lymphedemablog.com/2011/05/12/compression-garments-for-lymphedema-custom-or-ready-made/>

<http://www.lymphedemablog.com/2010/09/19/the-role-of-compression-garments-in-the-treatment-of-lymphedema/>