



Natural therapy | By Catherine Arnault

# the lymph nymph

*Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) is a painless treatment that stimulates the body's lymph circulation and decreases injury pain. It's rising in popularity with New Zealand medical practitioners and health clinicians, and Catherine Arnault explains why*

I have worked for many years with people suffering from a variety of conditions, including post-surgical pain and sports injuries. The rehabilitative process requires the right mental attitude, support, and good specialist advice. Otherwise, the healing process can be slow and frustrating.

For those with an active lifestyle, a well-functioning lymphatic or lymph system is an important facet of overall wellness and is essential to achieving your best. Flowing throughout the entire body, this is often referred to as the 'second circulatory system' and acts as a major elimination mechanism, expelling toxins through the bloodstream. It also plays a key role in the immune system.

MLD was developed in the 1930s and is a form of massage designed to unblock congested connective tissues. Its repeated slow, light, rhythmical movements take into account the direction of flow of the lymph under the hands and can improve almost any inflammatory condition. However, injuries need to be treated promptly, before changes such as fibrotic tissue occur, which could end up impairing physiological function. And for new injuries, such as sprains or fractures, MLD can offer benefits in areas where other therapies struggle to get a result. Because the manoeuvres are so gentle, they can

be applied to very painful and acute conditions without exacerbating them.

### **MLD is particularly useful as a sports treatment, as it:**

- 1** Increases the body's lymph circulation and improves the metabolism, helping to eliminate biochemical wastes, especially the lactic acid that builds up during training.
- 2** Enhances the body's fluid dynamics, thereby reducing swelling and minimising bruising.
- 3** Supports the immune system, helping to minimise scarring and hastening the healing process.
- 4** Has an effect on the parasympathetic system, promoting soft tissue relaxation. It can also reduce pain via the 'gate effect', where positive signals from the gentle touch override the pain signals.

MLD is also useful as a maintenance treatment for general detoxification. It is helpful in treating lymph oedema or lymph node ablation in cancer patients, and in addressing conditions like insomnia as well. Finally, it can boost your energy levels, increasing your vitality, and leaving you feeling more focused on your daily



duties and activities, and training sessions.

### **What should you look for in a MLD specialist?**

MLD massage movements are different from those of other massage forms. This means that correct training is essential, not only to ensure it is effective, but also for safety reasons. What's more, a therapist's level of training will determine what type of conditions they can treat.

### **MDL feels too light – is it actually working?**

One common misconception, when it comes to MLD therapy, is that its light approach cannot possibly be effective enough to bear results. Often those of us with a high level of fitness will go for deep-tissue massage to work out tight or sore muscles, so a soft massage seems counter-intuitive.

However, it is the very gentleness of MLD that promotes its health benefits. In particular, you need to remember that it is not a good idea to use firm pressure on oedematous – or swollen – tissues. ❖

**Catherine Arnault** is founder of the Interactive Healing Centre in Parnell, Auckland. An internationally trained health practitioner with more than 30 years of professional experience and expertise under her belt, her comprehensive background has allowed her to develop a functional approach aimed at treating people, rather than simply signs and symptoms. The support provided at the Interactive Healing Centre is tailored to each individual's particular needs. Each treatment programme addresses the underlying problems that compromise health and vitality, through a wide variety of techniques. The aim is to improve total wellbeing, physical appearance and other needs post-surgery. For more information you can visit: [www.lymphenergy.co.nz](http://www.lymphenergy.co.nz).

