

# What Is MLD? (Very Briefly)

## What is Dr Vodder's Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD®)?

Until 50 years ago, **lymph drainage** was a "poor stepchild" of medicine. The first descriptions of the lymph vessel system existed before the 16th century. In the 17th century, the lymph vessel system was rediscovered and described again. Even today, in many cases, **lymphology** is neglected in medical continuing education.

Dr. Emil and Estrid Vodder developed **MLD®** in France in the 1930s. They observed that in cases of chronic catarrhal infections of the upper airways, congestion occurred in the subcutis and the associated airways.

They were able to drain this **congestion** using pumping, circling, and flat finger strokes. They applied these movements according to the flow of the lymphatic vessels.

Dr. Asdonk founded the first center for Dr. Vodder's manual lymph drainage in Essen, Germany in the 1960s. He also prepared the first list of indications for MLD treatment.

In 1971, Gunther and Hildegard Wittlinger founded the Dr. Vodder Schule Walchsee, in which a special clinic for lymphology was incorporated some years later. In 1974, MLD became approved by health insurance in Germany because of the detailed scientific research and explanations of its proven benefits (Mislin, Kuhnke et al.).

In the following years, several clinics for lymphology and many new training centers for lymph drainage were created in Europe and other regions, including the Dr Vodder School International.

## How does Dr Vodder's MLD® affect the lymph system and health?

Lymphatic vessels are a vascular **network** connecting the tissues with the venous system. In evolutionary terms, they develop from embryonic tissue. Very fine initial lymphatic vessels start blind in the tissue. They flow into larger transport vessels and finally into the right and left **venous arches**. Lymph nodes are incorporated in the lymph vessel system. Lymph filtering through these nodes is cleaned of foreign material and pathogens.

### Characteristics of Dr. Vodder's MLD

Mild working pressure (approx. 30 mmHg)

Skin movement (no sliding)

Changing working pressure (pressure phase / zero phase)

Rhythmic

The Dr. Vodder method uses spiral or circular movements. During these movements, there is an increase in pressure up to approximately 30 mmHg (similar to the weight of a nickel coin) and then a decrease to approximately zero. This change in pressure produces an increase in the motor activity (contractions) of the lymphangions by stimulating the mechanoreceptors of the lymph vessels. This promotes filling of the initial lymphatic vessels (ILVs), which also increases the total lymph volume **transport** (movement / volume / flow). The direction of the applied pressure of the proper strokes corresponds to the direction of lymph drainage (generally toward the venous arches).

In order to move a large area of skin, a close skin contact is needed. The therapist normally works on dry skin without lubrication.

The MLD strokes are repetitive, lengthy, uniform, and rhythmic. This creates an involuntary sympatholytic effect, thereby reducing the activity of the Sympathetic Nervous System increasing relaxation and well-being. The skin movements cause neither redness nor pain. Dr. Vodder's MLD always starts at the neck, in the area where the large lymph vessels join the **venous arches** ("terminus").

The effect of MLD does not only depend on its technically perfect **execution**, but also on the fact that treatment time is adapted to the clinical situation. In most cases, this means a treatment time of 30 - 45 minutes, but it can also be increased up to 90 minutes. Largely based on information found in [Lecture\\_Notes\\_Vol1](#), Dr Vodder Akademie, Walchsee, Austria, 2005.

### Mode of action for Dr. Vodder's MLD

Improvement of the motor activity of lymphangions

Displacement of fluids

Softening of fibrosis

Sympatholytic effect

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