

PRINT-Vibration plates show promise for people with lymphedema

OSF expert says more research is needed

A growing social media trend is putting vibration plates in the spotlight as a potential tool to shake off lymphedema symptoms, though specialists caution that the devices should complement, not replace, established therapies.

Whole-body vibration plates, which create rapid muscle contractions while users stand, sit or exercise on the device, have attracted attention online for claims that they can improve circulation, reduce swelling and support [lymphatic health](#).

Many people discover the devices through social media platforms such as TikTok, where wellness trends often spread quickly. Rachel Rohman, PT, DPT, CLT, an OSF HealthCare physical therapist specializing in lymphedema treatment, stresses that while vibration plates may provide an additional tool for symptom management, they should not replace compression therapy, manual lymphatic drainage or other evidence-based treatments.

She also warns against believing claims circulating online that portray vibration plates as a standalone solution for lymphedema. While early research is encouraging, Rohman says evidence specific to lymphedema remains limited.

More research is needed

“There has been a lot of positive research regarding, especially improvements in circulation, improved venous vasodilation and getting the blood moving,” Rohman says. “While the circulatory system and the lymph system go hand in hand, there's not as much research looking directly at people with lymphedema and use of vibration plates.”

Lymphedema is a chronic condition caused by a disruption in the lymphatic system that leads to swelling, most commonly in the arms or legs. While the condition cannot be cured, it can often be effectively managed through treatments such as compression garments, manual lymphatic drainage therapy and compression pumps.

Rohman points out studies examining vibration plates in healthy individuals, and patients with other medical conditions, have demonstrated benefits related to circulation and mobility. A smaller number of studies have explored their use among people with lymphedema or related conditions, with some positive results.

In the past few years, there have been a handful of published studies including one that looked at women with a related condition called lipedema, which results in an abnormal fat buildup on both sides of the body.

Rohman explains, “Those women do get some swelling and that study did show some positive improvements in swelling over time with use of vibration plates in addition to manual lymphatic drainage massage. So, the new studies are showing some promise. I think there will be a lot more promising research that comes out, even potentially in the next few years.”

Because research remains limited, vibration plates are not considered part of the standard of care for lymphedema management. Instead, Rohman says she discusses the devices primarily with patients who are already following established treatment recommendations and are looking for additional ways to manage symptoms.

Vibration plates can be a good supplement to care

“They are already potentially doing their other treatment options that are more standard of care, but they're just looking to take their treatment to the next level and so I'm telling them that is an additional option they can try that does have some promising research,” Rohman shares.

Users of vibration plates often report feeling less swollen, more energized or generally better after use. For most healthy people, the devices are frequently incorporated into fitness routines, allowing people to perform body-weight exercises while standing on the vibrating platform.

Still, Rohman cautions that the devices are not appropriate for everyone.

“I am looking for a patient that does not have any medical contraindications,” Rohman says.

“They don't have any uncontrolled medical conditions that would warrant being seen by a specialist. Someone with an implanted device like a pacemaker, that can cause some harm to the device, which could be life-threatening.”

Patients with poor balance, untreated blood clots or uncontrolled heart and respiratory conditions could face increased risks. Anyone trying a vibration plate should begin with a low setting and short sessions before gradually increasing intensity.

For people experiencing swelling and considering vibration therapy, Rohman recommends consulting a lymphedema specialist first to determine whether the treatment is appropriate and to rule out other underlying causes.

As interest in vibration plates continues to grow, Rohman emphasizes that potential users should approach the therapy with realistic expectations and view it as one potential component of a broader treatment plan rather than a miracle cure.

Rachel Rohman is a physical therapist specializing in lymphedema treatment at OSF HealthCare in Bloomington.