You have been given this leaflet because you are at risk of cellulitis, or have had cellulitis.

**What is cellulitis?**  
Cellulitis is a type of infection that affects the tissues. People with lymphoedema are at risk of cellulitis. When there is swelling, bacteria may easily enter the body through a break in the skin, and multiply quickly. If you have lymphoedema, your lymphatic system may be less able to deal with infections.

**What are the signs of cellulitis?**  
The area may be hot, red, more swollen, tender or painful. You may notice a rash on your skin or red streaks up the limb. You may have a temperature and/or feel like you have ‘flu (shivery or generally unwell). You may feel tired or nauseated.

**What should I do if I think I have cellulitis?**  
It is important that you arrange to see your doctor the same day, or telephone NHS 24, if your GP surgery is closed. It is likely that you will require antibiotics. You should rest with your limb in a comfortable position, remove any compression garment or bandage, stop any massage or exercise, and drink fluids. You may be advised to take paracetamol to reduce your temperature. Once the acute infection has passed, and it is comfortable to do so, you should start wearing your compression garment again. If in doubt, get advice from a health care professional who knows your situation.

**What is the treatment for cellulitis?**  
If the cellulitis is managed at home, you will be given antibiotic tablets to take for a minimum of 14 days. It is very important that you finish the full course of treatment to ensure that the medication has fully removed the infection from the swollen areas.

Some people will be admitted to hospital for intravenous antibiotics, or given these as an out-patient. If you have recurring cellulitis, you may need to take a regular daily dose of an antibiotic for 1-2 years or more.

**What can I do to help prevent cellulitis?**  
You should protect your skin from any damage that can lead to infection:

* Wash and moisturise your skin daily to keep your skin healthy and supple
* Protect your skin from injury: use insect repellent to avoid insect bites; wear gloves when gardening; use sunscreen to avoiding burning; avoid injections in the area
* Use antiseptic cream or spray on any breaks in your skin on the affected area
* Care for your nails, and avoid walking barefoot if you have leg swelling
* If you have athlete’s foot, get advice on how to treat or prevent this as it increases the risk of cellulitis in someone with leg swelling.

**There may be a lymphoedema practitioner or group in your area. Ask for more information through your GP surgery or hospital team.**