

LYMPHEDEMA

There are two types of Lymphedema:

1. Primary (hereditary)
2. Secondary (non-hereditary)

Primary Lymphedema may occur:

- Congenital lymphedema - becomes evident within the first 2 years of life
- In newborn babies up to age 35, known as Lymphedema praecox
- Later in life, after age 35, known as Lymphedema tarda
- May occur without any known impetus or may develop after minor trauma or infection

Secondary Lymphedema may occur:

- As a result of injury, scarring or excision of a part of the lymphatic system
- As a result of radiation and/or surgery involving the lymph nodes or vessels
- Either immediately following surgery or several years later
- After a prolonged incidence of chronic venous insufficiency
- After recurrent acute or chronic inflammatory infection

Treatment Plans

Treatment for Lymphedema depends on where the patient is in the staging process of lymphedema. Each patient's treatment is based upon individual needs and medical history. Presently, the most effective and least invasive approach recommended by physicians is complete decongestive therapy (CDT), a combination of hygiene/topical skin care, manual lymphatic drainage, bandaging/compression and remedial exercises.



Our Staff

Our highly skilled, compassionate staff is dedicated to making patients feel comfortable and well-informed about their treatment. We combine years of experience with specialized certification and training to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved in every case.



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— Comprehensive —

LYMPHEDEMA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Definition of Lymphedema

An estimated 2.5 million people in the United States suffer from Lymphedema, a condition that is caused by the accumulation of lymphatic fluid in the body secondary to the dysfunction of a part of the lymphatic system, and results in swelling.

Lymphatic fluid is clear and is found in the lymphatic system, which is the immune system of the body, and works closely with the circulatory system. The lymphatic system filters and processes the overflow waste fluid of the circulatory system.



Edema, or swelling, occurs when venous and/or lymphatic vessels become restricted and fluid cannot flow freely through them. Lymphedema often causes a feeling of heaviness, discomfort, cosmetic deformity and repeated episodes of infection, such as cellulitis.

If left untreated, Lymphedema can lead to the hardening of underlying soft tissue (fibrosis) and overall bulkiness in the arms and legs. It also reduces the level of oxygen flowing to the tissues, which interferes with wound healing.

What are the symptoms?

Lymphedema may become visible early in life, within a few months after a procedure or infection, years later, or not at all. The first obvious sign of lymphedema is swelling characterized by “pitting”. This is recognizable when the skin is depressed for a few seconds and the indentation does not immediately disappear. Other symptoms may include a tightness or heaviness in the affected area or changes in the texture of the skin. You may notice that jewelry and clothing feel tighter. Often times lymphedema occurs in one isolated extremity although it may affect any area of the body.

What to do if symptoms occur

Contact your physician to rule out infection/cellulitis or blood clots. Once the diagnosis of lymphedema is confirmed, ask your doctor to make a referral to our lymphedema specialist by calling (478)201-6748 or faxing a written prescription to (478)757-0884.

Treatment of Complete Decongestive Therapy

Hygiene and Topical Skin Care

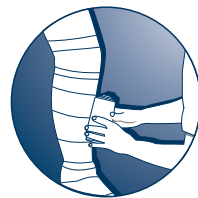
- Eliminating bacterial/fungal growth
- Using pH-balanced skin lotions
- Teaching meticulous skin and nail care

Manual Lymphatic Drainage

- Specific manual movements along lymphatic pathways that empty and release obstructed lymph vessels.
- Application of light, rhythmic pressure to stimulate movement of lymph fluid along the vessel pathway.



* Avoid manual lymphatic drainage if the following conditions exist: congestive heart failure, thrombosis (blood clots), local or acute infection with fever or undiagnosed swelling.



Bandaging/Compression

- Bandaging follows each manual lymphatic drainage session.
- Bandages are minimally elastic and prevent lymph fluid from re-entering the affected arm or leg.
- Bandages are worn until the next session.
- Upon completion of treatment, once the arm or leg is close to its normal size, the patient is custom-fit for a compression garment.

Remedial Exercises

- Exercises with bandages in place are prescribed for each patient to complete daily.
- Exercise activates each muscle group and facilitates proper lymph flow in the swollen arm or leg.

Avoid extreme temperatures including:

- Hot tubs, baths, showers and saunas

Education: Preventive Measures

Several everyday occurrences can lead to Lymphedema. In an effort to decrease the risk of developing or exacerbating Lymphedema, the following precautions should be taken.

Avoid infection which could be caused by:

- Insect bites
- Manicures and pedicures
- Needle punctures
- Cuts/sores

Avoid wearing:

- Tight clothing, especially bra straps
- Rings, watches or bracelets worn too tightly

Benefits of Treatment

- Reduces swelling to maximize functional ability
- Return to work and leisure activities
- Improves pain management and comfort
- Prevents infection and other complications through self-management and patient/family education
- Promotes patient responsibility so patients can take charge of their own care
- Enhances self-esteem/body image