

Lymphedema Risk Management Guidelines

The focus of these guidelines is to decrease undue stress on the lymphatic system of the involved limb. To minimize your risk, we recommend the following:

1. **Precautions for Medical Procedures** – Unless ordered by your physician, do not allow anyone to draw blood, give an injection, insert an intravenous (IV) needle, or take your blood pressure on the involved limb.
2. **Avoid Infection** – An inflammation or infection in the limb could lead to the beginning or worsening of lymphedema. Prevent infection by:
 - Carefully wash and properly apply an antiseptic ointment, such as Bacitracin or Neosporin to any cut.
 - Minimize nick and cuts to skin. For example, shave and manicure carefully.
 - Wear gloves and clothing covering the at risk limb when gardening or handling household chemicals.
3. **Pace Back to Previous Activities** – Use the involved limb as normally as possible, but when your limb feels heavy, tired, or fatigued, take a break.
4. **Avoid Constriction** – Avoid tight or binding jewelry, watches, and tight clothing. When sleeping, avoid lying on your involved side.
5. **Avoid Extreme Temperatures** – Protect your limb with sunscreen. Hot tubs and saunas are not recommended.
6. **Live a Balanced Life** – Eat a well-balanced diet and stay physically active to maintain your recommended body weight.
7. **Air Travel** - When flying in an airplane, wear a compression garment on the at risk limb.



An Affiliate of Methodist Health System

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For more information on Lymphedema visit the
National Lymphedema Network website at www.lymphnet.org.

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THE FACTS ON Lymphedema



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The Lymphatic System

The lymphatic system is a network of vessels, tissues and lymph nodes found throughout the body. This system functions to remove extra fluid and waste products from the tissue spaces, which is eventually returned to the general circulation. Lymph nodes also assist in the removal of body toxins and have a role in fighting infection.

Lymphedema

Lymphedema is the medical term for an abnormal accumulation of lymphatic fluid in the tissue spaces that results in swelling, most commonly in the arm or leg and occasionally in the trunk or other regions of the body.

Lymphedema can develop when lymphatic vessels are absent or underdeveloped ("primary lymphedema"), or when lymphatic vessels are damaged or lymph nodes are removed ("secondary lymphedema"). If left untreated, the swelling can become so severe as to cause hardening of the skin, loss of motion in the affected body part, increased risk of infection and general discomfort.

Symptoms of Lymphedema



Signs and symptoms of lymphedema include:

- Obvious swelling or decreased flexibility of the arm or leg.
- Difficulty fitting into clothing or jewelry.
- Sensations of fullness, heaviness, tightness in the involved area.
- Limb fatigue and aching for no apparent reason.

For more information contact the JEH Lymphedema Center at 712-396-6025



Treatment

Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) is an advanced program for the person with lymphedema, consisting of manual lymph drainage, compression therapy, exercise, skin care and home program instructions. Treatment includes measurement and fitting of appropriate compression garments.

Total number of treatments will vary based on the severity of the lymphedema; an individualized treatment plan is established for each client upon initial evaluation. Those clients requiring intensive treatment are generally seen at the center three days a week for an average of four to six weeks.

Treatment is provided by licensed physical therapists who have achieved certification as lymphedema specialists through intensive training.

How to Access Treatment

Lymphedema should be diagnosed by a medical professional. Visit your physician before initiating any treatment for lymphedema. To receive treatment at the Jennie Edmundson Lymphedema Center, please obtain a prescription from your physician.



The Jennie Edmundson Lymphedema Center is a National Lymphedema Network (NLN) Sponsoring Treatment Center.



The Jennie Edmundson Lymphedema Center is conveniently located in the outpatient Physical Therapy Clinic at Jennie Edmundson Hospital. For more information about therapy and treatment, please call (712) 396-6025.