

Self-Care

Beyond Basics Physical Therapy

Lymphedema

Tips for Swelling Reduction:

Rest affected limb above level of heart 2-3 times a day while lying down

- Lye for 30-45 min, limb elevated
- “Pump” hand or foot 15 to 25 times while elevated
- DO NOT sit in same position for more than 30 minutes
- DO NOT cross legs while sitting

- Wear loose jewelry
- Wear clothing without tight waistbands or cuffs
- Wear a supportive bra, not too tight
- Carry handbag in unaffected arm
- DO NOT use elastic support bandages or stockings with tight bands

Skin Care:

- Daily, wash skin thoroughly
- Use Eucerin or any other low pH lotion daily on affected limb to protect from pathogens
- Check skin daily for any changes

Skin Protection:

- Use only electric razor for shaving underarms or legs
- Wear gardening and cooking gloves
- Wear gloves for housework
- Thimble use for sewing
- Sunscreen with SPF 30+
- Use insect repellent
- Avoid very hot or cold things (i.e. ice packs or hot packs)
- Stay out of hot tubs and saunas
- Blood draws, IVs, shots in NON- affected limb
- DO NOT wear tight clothing or wrap anything tight on affected limb
- Avoid exposure to animal scratches, bites
- Avoid exposure to biting or stinging insects
- Avoid unnecessary skin punctures (acupuncture, piercing)
- Avoid self-induced scratching, nail-biting



Foot Care:

- Cut toenails straight across. If needed, see podiatrist to prevent ingrown nails and infections
- Keep feet covered when outdoors. DO NOT walk barefoot
- Keep feet clean and dry, wear cotton socks

Wound Care:

- Wash wounds gently with soap and water
- Apply an antibiotic cream or ointment to the area
- Cover wounds with dry gauze or bandages, DO NOT wrap tightly
- Call health care provider if infection present
- Infection signs include:
 - Rash, red blotches, swelling, heat, pain or fever

Burn Care:

- Place cold pack or run cold water for 15 minutes
- Wash gently with soap and water
- Place clean, dry bandage over burn
- Call provider if infection present

When to call the Doctor:

- New rashes or skin breaks that do not heal
- Ring or shoes become tighter
- Increased weakness in arm or leg
- Pain, aching or increased heaviness in arm or leg
- Signs of infection: redness, swelling, heat, pain or fever

Other lifestyle changes may lessen the risk of triggering or worsening lymphedema.

When traveling by air use compression garment or short stretch bandaging. (Those who do not have lymphedema but are predisposed should seek the advice of a lymphedema specialist before ordering garments).

- Keep body weight at optimal levels (Obesity can cause lymphedema or worsen pre-existing lymphedema)
- Exercise regularly (special exercises are recommended. Seek expert guidance)
 - o Seek medical assistance immediately if infection exists.
- Seek appropriate treatment for your lymphedema. (Complete Decongestive Therapy) CDT is safe and reliable

