

Lymphedema Guidelines for Your Affected Limb(s)

<i>What should I do?</i>	<i>Explanation:</i>
Wear gloves while doing housework, gardening, or other types of work that can result in even minor injuries. Use a thimble when sewing. Avoid burns.	Any cut in the skin will allow infectious bacteria to enter the tissue.
Never allow an injection (including acupuncture) or blood drawing in the affected extremity.	Injections or blood drawing will pierce the skin, providing an entry for infection.
Have blood pressures checked in the unaffected extremity.	The inflated blood pressure cuff further limits the circulation in an arm that already has poor circulation.
Avoid heavy lifting with the affected arm. Do not carry heavy handbags with over-the-shoulder straps. Carry handbags on opposite arm of affected limbs.	Lifting puts strain on the arm with poor circulation.
Avoid vigorous, repetitive movements against resistance with the affected arm or leg (rubbing, scrubbing, pushing, or pulling).	Physical exertion causes sudden, rapid blood flow through the muscle and tissue, further damaging an already compromised system.
Elevate the affected arm(s) or leg(s) whenever possible.	This will help improve circulation in the affected extremity.
Consult your therapist about any sports activities in which you participate, because some may aggravate the condition. However, swimming, bike riding, walking, and specially designed ballet or yoga movements are encouraged.	Physical exertion forces the damaged lymphatic system to try to do the work that it cannot do.
Avoid extreme temperature changes in bathing, washing dishes, or sunbathing. Keep the limb protected from the sun. Use sun block.	Heat increases the blood flow through the tissues. Sudden temperature changes cause undue stress on the weakened system.
Maintain good hygiene by keeping skin clean and dry with hypoallergenic soap and deodorant. Keep feet clean, dry, and free of fungal infections. Do not go barefoot, inside or out.	This will protect the skin from irritation and possible infection.
Use an electric razor rather than a safety razor.	An electric razor will prevent puncturing the skin and subsequent infection.
Do not wear tight clothing or jewelry around affected fingers, arms, or legs.	Constricting items will worsen an already compromised circulatory system.
Avoid cutting cuticles when manicuring hands or pedicuring feet, cut nails straight across.	Any skin puncture risks introducing infection.
Maintain your ideal weight through a well-balanced, low salt diet; avoid smoking and alcoholic beverages.	Unwanted weight gain will increase swelling in the limbs.
Restore and maintain good extremity mobility, as well as good posture.	Since lymph nodes are located in the under arm and groin area, good muscle and joint flexibility may improve lymph flow.
GRADUALLY return to your normal level of activity including exercise. Consult a physical therapist if you have any questions about how to progress.	Gradual return to activity allows the body to adjust to increased muscle activity and venous / lymphatic flow.
As soon as you receive an insect bite / pet scratch or sustain a minor injury to the affected side, clean the skin thoroughly.	Keeping the area clean and using topical antibiotics is vitally important to prevent serious infection.
Wear a compression garment when traveling by airplane.	A compression garment will maintain the pressure in your limb and decrease the chance of swelling.