

LYMPHEDEMA INFORMATION



Some of the main functions of the lymphatic system include:

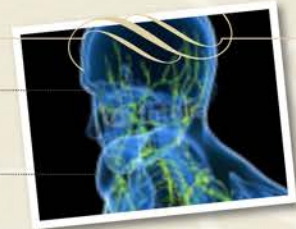
- Transportation of tissue fluids from intracellular spaces back to veins
- Assisting the body to build immunity to infectious disease

Lymphedema - is the blockage or damage of lymphatic system which prevents the lymph from draining and results in swelling

Common causes:

- Damage to lymph nodes resulting from cancer treatment
- Infection - causing restriction of the flow of lymph.

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Common Treatment Options for Lymphedema

Compression Therapy - Help to maintain and optimize manual lymph drainage by using compression bandaging or garments. During movement, firm low elastic bandages or garments help to enhance the effects of the muscle pumps during movement.

Compression Products Available at OrthoHealth

- Prefabricated compression garments
- Made to measure / custom made compression garments
- Bandage /wraps taping
- Comprilan wraps
- CirCad /JuxtaFit compression system
- Lymphedema taping

Manual Lymph Drainage - massage to help in the movement of fluid

Skin Care - Lifelong skin care is imperative, since the skin is particularly vulnerable to infections. Situations that could result in punctures or injury to the skin should be avoided.

Movement through exercises such as Yoga, assist in increasing and maintaining joint range of motion, increases the effectiveness of compression therapy via muscle pump.

Complete Decongestive Therapy is the co-ordination of the above listed treatment options by a medical professional such as a physiotherapist or occupational therapist that is certified in decongestive therapy.

How do clients access this treatment

- Individuals that have had lymphedema as a result of their cancer treatment may receive treatment through Cancer Care Ontario at a local Regional Cancer Centre like the RVH Regional Cancer Care Center.
- An individual that has lymphedema that is associated to other congenital or related to other medical conditions may seek treatment at other facilities with trained staff, on referral from their family doctor. Some private insurance may cover the cost of treatment.

Surgical Treatments

- After successful treatment of lymphedema, an individual may be left with excessive skin sacs. They can occur with extreme cases of lymphedema. The skin folds can macerate and become infected. Surgical removal during this situation may be considered.
- Surgical intervention is considered when traditional Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) has failed. The surgical treatment of lymphedema can be divided into four broad categories including excisional, liposuction, lymphatic reconstruction and tissue transfer.