

HOW DO I GET HELP?

Anyone can contact Pro-Rehab Services for information and assistance. However, since the therapy we provide is medical, we require a physician referral to begin services. The referral can be obtained through your physician. Our staff is available to assist you in this process.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Contact your physician for any of the following:

- Increase in size of your limb
- Feeling of heat in your limb
- Bursting sensation in your limb
- Red patches could indicate infection
- Puffiness of the limb
- Swelling or heat in the trunk on the surgery side
- Tenderness in groin or bloated abdomen following pelvic surgery
- Swelling thigh following removal or radiation to groin or pelvic nodes

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Daily skin check
- Prevent infection
- Avoid fatigue and injury
- Use Sunscreen
- Wear oven mitts and rubber gloves for household activities
- Avoid tight, constrictive clothing or jewelry
- Mild/moderate exercise 20 minutes/3x week
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Consult your physician immediately at sign of infection

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT

Pro-Rehab Services

6400 College Dr. – Suite 800

Palos Heights, IL 60463

(708) 633-0600

PRO-REHAB

Services



Lymphedema:

“Questions Often Asked”

THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

The Lymphatic System is part of the Circulatory System that carries blood and fluid to and from all parts of the body. The lymphatic vessels carry the excess fluids and larger waste from the tissue spaces through cleansing lymph nodes and return the fluid for recirculation throughout the body. It also plays an important role in our body's disease fighting mechanism.

WHAT IS LYMPHEDEMA?

Lymphedema occurs when there is a blockage of the lymph pathways, resulting in an accumulation of lymph fluid in the restricted area. This blockage may be the result of surgery, radiation, injury or from a birth defect. There are two types of lymphedema; Primary and Secondary. Primary lymphedema may be inherited or occur at any age for unknown reasons. Secondary lymphedema is the more common of the two and may develop after surgical removal of lymph nodes or scarring from radiation treatment. It can occur immediately or years after treatment.

SHOULD LYMPHEDEMA BE TREATED?

Lymphedema, if untreated, creates swollen limbs that can become infected. Infections lead to loss of motion of the limbs, weakness and skin breakdown. If the condition of swelling continues, the

tissue thickens and hardens and the problem becomes worse. Pain from swelling pressing on nearby nerves may also occur.

DOES LYMPHEDEMA IMPLY THE CANCER HAS RETURNED?

When swelling first appears, many people worry that their cancer has returned. Although returning cancer can cause lymphedema, this often isn't the case. If you notice an area of swelling, contact your physician for diagnosis.

IS ALL SWELLING LYMPHEDEMA?

No, there are many reasons why swelling may develop. If you are concerned, contact your physician.

WILL DIURETICS HELP?

As a rule, diuretics have little effect on this type of swelling. There may be other specific health reasons for your physician to prescribe this medication, so discuss this with him or her.

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?

- Avoid injuries or activities that could lead to infection
- Avoid changes in temperature that could lead to or increase swelling
- Avoid constriction of the swollen or at risk area.

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE?

A typical treatment program includes any or all of the following:

- *Manual Lymph Treatment*—a gentle hands on technique to facilitate absorption of lymphatic fluid
- *Compression bandaging/garments/pumps*—utilized to reduce and control swelling of the extremity
- *Exercise*—when performed properly as instructed by a lymphedema therapist, exercise facilitates reduction of edema in the affected extremity.

CAN LYMPHEDEMA BE CURED?

With early and skilled treatment, lymphedema can be controlled to allow the individual to lead a full and normal life. A therapeutic home program is a key factor to this control.

WHO IS A CANDIDATE FOR TREATMENT?

Individuals who present with swelling due to heredity, trauma, lymph node removal and/or radiation are candidates for evaluation. If there is a question regarding active cancer or infections, further physician's review will be required. A referral from a physician is a requirement for evaluation and treatment.