

## **Do's and Don'ts with lymphedema**

**Avoid any injuries to the skin-** be careful in the garden, playing with pets or doing housework- wear gloves. Avoid the use of scissors to cut your nails and don't cut your cuticles. Injuries, even small ones may cause infections. Use an electric razor (in good condition) when removing hair from the swollen area. Do not have blood samples or your blood pressure taken from the affected area. Wear insect repellent as a single mosquito bite can cause an infection. Skin moisturizers containing natural insect repellants are available.

**Avoid heat-** hot showers, heating pads on the area, sunbathing and the use of saunas could have a negative effect on lymphedema. Compression garments do not protect from UV rays. Avoid extreme changes in temperature (hot/cold), massages ("Swedish") on the affected area or any cosmetics that irritate the skin.

**Inform all health care personnel that you have lymphedema-** injections or acupuncture in affected area should be avoided. Blood pressure should be taken on the area free of lymphedema.

**Nutrition is important-** there is no special diet for lymphedema. Today most nutritionists recommend a low salt, low fat diet. Obesity may have a negative effect on your swelling.

**Water consumption-** Individuals should be drinking ½ their weight in ounces of water daily, + 20 ounces. An individual who weighs 200# should drink 100 ounces daily + 20 ounces once consistent. Know the ounces of each cup you drink out of. Increase water intake *slowly*. Start with what water you, on average, drank the last 3 days. If its 1 glass (8 oz) of water, then stay at 1 glass (8 oz) daily for 3 days. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, increase to 2 glasses (16 oz) each day. On day 7, increase to 3 glasses (24 oz) daily. Keep going until you consistently stay at the total ounces. As your weight and activity fluctuates, so will the required daily water intake.

Drink most of the water 4 hours prior to bedtime, then taper fluid intake. This allows your urinary system to drain before interrupting your sleep. This DOES NOT include teas, coffee, juices, pop, etc. The digestive system filters out the additives which requires energy and minimal water remains. For those of you on water restrictions, consult your medical professional.

**Travel-** Due to the increased elevation in planes and valleys/ mountains, tissues receive less external pressure, potential for increased lymphedema.

**Clothing-** clothing that is too tight may restrict the proper flow of lymph. Avoid tight bras, underwear, shoes, or socks and make sure your jewelry fits loosely.

**See your doctor-** if you have any signs of an infection (fever, chills, red and hot skin), fungal infections or if you notice any other unusual changes.

**Use caution when exercising-** avoid movements that overstrain, discuss proper exercises and activities with your therapist. Review this table of activities.

<b>Beneficial</b>	<b>Medium Risk</b>	<b>High Risk</b>
Swimming / water aerobics	Jogging / Running	Gardening (wounds)
Gentle exercises	Biking	Intense / lengthy Sports
Walking	Weight lifting	Shoveling snow
Manual Lymph Drainage	Golfing	Moving furniture
Yoga / Pilates	Volleyball / Tennis	Carrying / Lifting Luggage
Easy biking / skating (10-20 mins)	Easy horse riding	Intense horse back riding
Deep breathing exercises		Long periods in one position