

How to Manage Your Lymphedema

For patients who have lymphedema due to cancer treatment

Read this booklet to learn more about:

- What lymphedema is
- Why it's important to manage lymphedema
- How to take care of yourself when you have lymphedema
- Where to get more information

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What is lymphedema?

Lymphedema is a swelling of a body part caused by a build up of protein-rich fluid, called **lymph**, in the tissue spaces. The build up of fluid happens when your lymphatic system has been weakened because of your cancer treatment, and it is not able to drain the fluid well.

Lymphatic vessels collect the lymph from body tissues and drain it into the blood after it has been filtered by several lymph nodes.

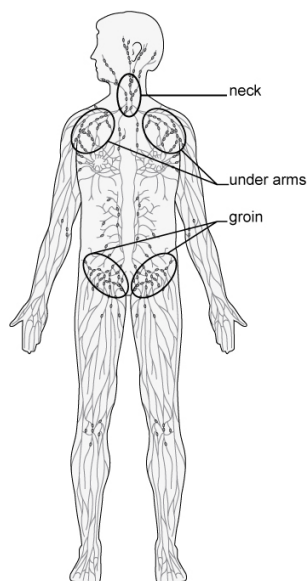
Lymphatic flow is the flow of lymph fluid in your lymphatic system.

What is the lymphatic system?

The lymphatic system is made up of lymph nodes, lymph vessels and lymphoid organs, such as the tonsils and spleen. The picture below shows the lymph vessels and lymph nodes in different areas in your body. There are 600 to 800 lymph nodes throughout the body. The circles show the clusters (groups) of lymph nodes that are commonly removed during some cancer treatment.

Our lymphatic system collects and filters fluid from all the tissues in our body. In the lymph nodes, waste products are removed or broken down into smaller parts. The lymph fluid returns to the circulatory system (heart, veins and arteries) just before the blood enters the heart. If the pathways the lymph travels through are blocked or damaged, fluid and proteins can build up in your tissues.

The lymphatic system



Lymph nodes are round, kidney or bean shaped lymphatic organs that filter away harmful materials (such as cancer cells, pathogens, dust, dirt) from lymph fluid. They help fight infection.

How can cancer treatment cause lymphedema?

Your lymphatic system can be damaged if you were treated for cancer by having:

- surgery that involved removing the lymph nodes
- radiation to lymph nodes
- radiation to an area of your body where lymph nodes were removed

In this pamphlet, the area that is not properly drained due to a damaged lymphatic system is referred to as “the affected area of the body”. This is usually the area of your body that was treated for cancer.

Once you have had surgery and/or radiation, you are **at risk** for lymphedema in the affected area of your body **for the rest of your life**. Usually, if lymphedema occurs, it develops within 3 years of cancer treatment. But, lymphedema may develop at any time after treatment.

Symptoms of lymphedema

If you have lymphedema, you may have these symptoms in your affected area(s):

- swelling
- a feeling of tightness, fullness or heaviness
- aching, stiffness or pain
- reduced movement in the affected area of your body that may cause you to feel tired when doing everyday activities and exercise
- **(for people who have had lymph nodes treated and/or removed in the head and neck area)** swelling inside the mouth that may make it difficult to speak or say words properly

What areas of the body can be affected by lymphedema?

If you had treatment for cancer in your upper body (like breast cancer, melanoma, sarcoma), lymphedema may occur in your:

- hand
- chest
- arm
- trunk
- shoulder
- back
- breast

If you had treatment for cancer in your lower body (like melanoma, sarcoma endometrial, ovarian, cervical, prostate, testicular, or anal cancer) lymphedema may occur in your:

- feet
- legs
- groin
- genitals
- abdomen

If you had treatment for head and neck cancer, the lymphedema may occur in your:

- face
- neck
- mouth

What is lymphedema care and why is it important?

The swelling caused by lymphedema can be controlled if you care for it regularly. But, the changes that brought on the swelling will not go away. This means you will always be at risk for infection and swelling in your affected area even if your affected area is not swollen anymore.

Lymphedema is a condition that can get worse over time without proper care. Lymphedema self-care can help reduce the symptoms you feel and prevent problems from happening or getting worse.

The 4 main areas of self-care in managing your lymphedema are:

1. Skin care

Your skin is the first defense system against infection. Lymphedema puts you at a higher risk of a skin infection in the affected area of your body. Caring for your skin well is the best way for you to protect yourself from infection. An infection in your affected area may worsen swelling. So, take steps to avoid any injury to your skin, as openings in the skin may let bacteria in.

The skin care section of this pamphlet will show you how you can work with your health care team to check for, find and manage changes in your skin.

2. Lymphatic massage

Lymphatic massage is a gentle skin stretching massage that helps move lymph fluid out of the congested tissues and into the lymphatic system to help the affected area drain normally. Your care team may recommend a lymphatic self-massage skills teaching session at the Cancer Rehab and Survivorship (CRS) Clinic.

Lymphatic massage is also offered by community lymphedema therapists called CDT (Combined Decongestive Therapist). It is not OHIP covered, but often covered by extended health benefits. Wait times are often less in the community.

3. Compression bandaging and garments

Compression may involve bandaging of the affected limb. The goal is to reduce swelling first, and then wear a compression garment to keep the swelling stable.

Compression garments can be prescribed for people with lymphedema. There are different levels of compression and different materials. The kind of compression you need depends on how much swelling you have.

The compression section of this pamphlet describes:

- how your care team at the CRS Clinic will help you decide what kind of compression garments you need
- when to wear compression garments
- what program can help to pay the cost (Assistive Devices Program)
- where to go for a certified fitter to measure your compression garment

4. Exercise

All types of exercise are very important for those who have lymphedema. Muscle contraction (muscle shortening or tensing) helps move lymphatic fluid.

There are many types of exercise that help lymphatic flow:

- **Decongestive exercises** involve gentle muscle movements that help improve lymphatic flow in the affected area(s). We will show you decongestive exercises in the CRS Clinic.
- **Flexibility (stretching) exercises** reduce tightness and the effects of scarring which can reduce lymphatic flow. These exercises help maintain or improve your flexibility for normal movement.
- **Muscle strengthening exercises** should be started at a low weight, and progressed slowly to train muscles, the heart and the lungs to work better.
- **Aerobic exercises** such as swimming, walking, biking and dancing have many different health benefits including improving lymphatic flow.



Remember: Lymphedema can be managed. Your health care team at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Cancer Rehab and Survivorship Clinic provides the support you need to manage your lymphedema care. The next pages have more detail about the four areas of care so you can take an active part in managing your lymphedema.

Skin care

Your skin is the largest organ in your body and your biggest defense against infection. Lymphedema puts you at a higher risk of infection in the affected area of your body. That means that it is important to make sure your skin is not broken and protected from damage.

Key areas of your skin care are:

- ✓ Protect your skin
- ✓ Know the signs of an infection
- ✓ Treat skin breaks
- ✓ Take care of your nails
- ✓ Wash your compression garments **every day**

Protect your skin

- ✓ **Clean and moisturize your skin**
 - Keep your skin clean by using mild soaps and patting it dry.
 - Moisturize your skin often with a deep penetrating unscented moisturizer.
- ✓ **Be careful when shaving the affected area**
 - Nerves in your affected areas may have been damaged during surgery, so you may have less feeling in the area.
 - If you have less feeling in your affected area, you may be more likely to get nicks and cuts even with an electric razor.
 - Always check your skin carefully to look for nicks or cuts after shaving. If you find nicks or cuts, see treating skin breaks on page 10.
- ✓ **Protect yourself from insect bites**
 - Any bite is a break in the skin. A bite can also trigger your body's healing response which includes swelling.
 - Wear insect repellent or a bug jacket when in an area with lots of bugs. If you do not want to wear insect repellent, you can spray it on your clothes or hat.

✓ **Protect yourself from getting sunburn**

- Use sunscreen that has SPF of 45 or more to protect against sunburn. Apply a good amount of sunscreen to cover all exposed skin evenly 15 to 30 minutes before being under the sun. Re-apply every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating a lot.
- Consider wearing clothing that is SPF rated. SPF rated clothing can protect you from the sun.
 - Hats are sold in Princess Margaret Wig Salon – 3rd floor
 - For more information about SPF rated shirts, jackets and long pants check online at www.sunprecautions.com

✓ **Protect yourself from chemical irritation**

- Avoid or use caution with chemical hair removers. They may irritate and leave the skin raw. If you do use chemical hair removers, try a patch test first.
- Avoid or use caution with wax-type hair removers. Small openings are left in the skin after the hair is removed. If you do use wax hair removers, try a patch test first.
- Avoid harsh soaps or detergents. They may irritate your skin causing raw areas where bacteria can enter.
- Swimming is good exercise and helps manage your lymphedema, but chemicals in the pools may cause irritation. Make sure you shower and put on moisturizing cream as soon as you get out of the pool.

✓ **If the affected area is your upper body, protect your hands and arms when:**

- Cleaning: wear rubber gloves
 - Gardening: always wear garden gloves, consider long sleeves to protect your arms from scratches
 - Riding: wear protective gloves when riding horses and bicycles
 - Cooking: use long oven mitts
 - Sewing: use a thimble.
- If your work involves handling paper, you may be prone to skin cuts. Try to wear cotton gloves or rubber fingertips.

✓ **If the affected area is your lower body:**

- Wear shoes with closed toes and heels to protect your feet when needed.
- Make sure shoes fit well to avoid blisters and calluses.
- If you are prone to calluses, use pumice stones to smooth the bottom of your feet regularly to avoid cracking.
- Wear long pants to protect from sun, insects and scratches.
- Keep feet well moisturized.

✓ **If your affected area is your head and neck**

- Avoid or use caution when plucking or waxing hair from your face. If you do use wax hair removers, try a patch test first.
- Be regular with your dental care: have a general dental exam at least every 6 months. Check with a dentist at your cancer centre before having any dental surgery or major dental work.

Know the signs of an infection

Any break in your skin on the affected area such as pinpricks, pet scratches, thorn scratches, burns or punctures could lead to infection. People with lymphedema have a higher risk of **cellulitis**, which is a bacterial infection of the skin. Knowing the signs of an infection early is an important part of your lymphedema care.

Signs that an area may be infected are:

- Swelling in these areas and changes in the colour of the skin
 - In darker skin tones, the skin may appear more purple, gray, or may not change colour at all. In lighter skin tones, the skin may appear red. This redness can quickly spread.
- Skin becoming raised, thick or pitted. Feeling of pain, tenderness and/or warmth in the affected area.
- Having a fever or chills and feeling unwell.



If you have any of the signs or symptoms above in your affected area, go to your family doctor or nurse practitioner, a walk-in clinic, an Urgent Care Centre or your local hospital Emergency Department right away.

Explain that you have had cancer treatment and you now have lymphedema. This will help to make sure you get the right care.

To find an Urgent Care Centre in your area, go to:

- www.ontario.ca/page/urgent-care-centres

or

- www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/hco/options/urgent.aspx

How do I talk with my healthcare providers if I think I have an infection?

Healthcare providers who do not work within cancer care may be less aware about the higher risk of infection for people with lymphedema.

We created a summary card below. If you think you have an infection in your affected area and need to go to an Emergency Department, a walk-in clinic, or your family doctor, you can share this information with your health care provider by tearing out this page or cutting out the card below:

Attention health care providers: Patient with increased infection risk

- This patient is at a **significantly higher risk of cellulitis** due to secondary lymphedema from cancer treatments. This is because they have reduced immunity in the swollen limb.
- Please note that their symptoms may present atypically.
- If an infection is developing, they require prompt treatment to prevent avoidable hospitalization and recurrent cellulitis.

Please see the Guidelines on the Management of Cellulitis in Lymphedema at Tinyurl.com/cellulitis-guidelines.

Treat skin breaks

If you do get any kind of break in your skin, make sure to treat it right away:

1. Wash the area with soap and water.
2. Apply an antibiotic ointment to the open area.
3. Cover with an adhesive bandage (Band-Aid)
4. Clean and re-apply ointment and Band-Aid daily or if it gets wet.

It can be difficult to keep Band-Aids on your hand, fingers or toes. Liquid band-aid is a good solution to cover shallow cuts or scratches. Most contain an agent such as oil of clove or tea tree oil that can stop bacteria from growing. "New Skin"™ or "Nexcare Skin and Crack Care"™ are examples of liquid bandage. They can be found in the bandage section of the drug store.

Take care of your nails

Your nails may be damaged by chemotherapy. Cuticles can become dry, causing hangnails or other openings for bacteria to get in. Pay close attention to your nails and cuticles.

- ✓ Cut toe nails straight across to avoid ingrown toenails.
- ✓ Avoid cutting your cuticles or biting your nails.
- ✓ Use an acetone-free nail polish remover.
- ✓ Soak your nails in a small container of slightly warmed olive oil (warm the olive oil for 10 seconds in the microwave). This nourishes brittle nails and can prevent breaking.
- ✓ Soften cuticles on hands with cream or oil to help prevent hangnails, splitting and dryness. Try pushing your cuticles back with a washcloth after soaking them in warmed olive oil.

If you treat yourself to a manicure or pedicure, make sure the tools are used only for you or that they are well sterilized to avoid infection. This includes the basin in which you soak your hands or feet. Tell the manicurist not to cut your cuticles.

Manual lymphatic drainage

Lymphatic self-massage

Lymphatic massage gently stretches the skin and helps move fluid away from an area that is swollen to areas of the body where the lymphatic system has not been affected by cancer treatment. Lymphatic massage is very different from deep muscle massage. This massage uses light pressure and gentle, rhythmic strokes to help increase the flow of lymph.

What to keep in mind when doing lymphatic self-massage:

- Keep your hands soft and relaxed
- Use the pads of your fingers or palm to make contact with your skin, and use only enough pressure to gently stretch the skin as far as it naturally goes, then release. This movement is similar to a gentle stroking or sweeping motion.
- Do lymphatic self-massage every day for about 20 minutes.

The CRS Clinic has education about lymphatic self-massage taught by a Combined Decongestive Therapist (CDT) specifically trained in manual lymph drainage. You may also learn this skill from a community CDT. The massage may vary based on your specific treatments and health history.

For patients with head and neck cancers, check with your doctor before trying this.

Manual lymph drainage with lymphedema specialists

Besides learning lymphatic self-massage, you could also go for Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) by a specially trained lymphedema therapist. These therapists can be Registered Massage Therapists, Physiotherapists, Nurses or Occupational Therapists who have a minimum of 135 hours of special training in manual lymph drainage and a designation of “**CDT**” (Combined Decongestive Therapist).

MLD is very important for moving fluid out of your affected area(s). It moves fluid to drain to other areas of your body that have lymph nodes not affected by surgery or radiation. The therapist is able to reach areas difficult for you to do yourself, such as your back.

This treatment is not covered under the government plan. If you have other insurance, it may be covered by your policy. Each session usually lasts 45 – 60 minutes. The cost ranges from \$100 to \$130 an hour. There are no clear guidelines for how often MLD should be done. Talk to your doctor and health care team before trying this and decide what is best for you.

How to find a MLD Therapist

- To find a qualified therapist in your area phone The Lymphedema Association of Ontario at 416 410 2250 or www.lymphontario.ca/directory

Or

- Ask for a Lymphedema Certified Therapist list at the Princess Margaret CRS Clinic

Kinesio taping and lymphedema

Kinesio taping is the use of a special elastic tape that can help reduce swelling in an area of your body.

Kinesio taping works with your lymphatic system in many ways. The tape:

- lifts the skin to help your body drain lymphatic fluid
- directs lymph fluid away from an area of swelling
- improves how your muscle moves (contract) which can help lymph drainage and blood circulation

Kinesio taping can help treat face, neck, arms, shoulder, trunk, legs and feet lymphedema. It can also be used together with self-massage.

Talk to the staff at the CRS Clinic to learn more about kinesio taping.

Compression

Compression may involve bandaging the arm or leg followed by wearing a compression garment.

Bandaging

- Compression by bandages helps your body move lymph fluid in the direction of your heart by supporting your skin and tissues. Special multi-layered bandages are used with padding. The goal of bandaging is to help you reduce the size of your arm or leg whether it is a new swelling or a swelling that is changing.
- Bandages are used every day for a period of time. Your care team at the CRS Clinic will suggest how long you need to use them.
- Bandaging works best in the daytime when you are active to help support the action of your arm or leg muscles which pump on the lymph vessels, but you can also wear the bandages at night when you are sleeping. **Do not** wear bandages on your face, head, or neck.
- Once the size of your arm or leg is reduced, you will be fitted for a compression garment to wear in the daytime.

- If appropriate, you and your caregivers will be taught how to bandage your arm or leg at CRS.
- If you are not able to do the bandaging yourself, a home care nurse from Home and Community Care Support Services may be able to help. Ask your care team for more information.
- Some community lymphedema therapists also offer bandaging (see “How to Find an MLD Therapist” above), but this is not covered by the government.

Compression garments

A compression garment can be fitted for you after your swelling has stayed the same for a period of time. The goal of a compression garment is to maintain the size of the affected area. There are compression garments for:

- upper body lymphedema: sleeves, gloves (covers the hand and fingers), gauntlets (covers just the hand) and vests
- lower body lymphedema: stockings, pantyhose and bicycle shorts
- head and neck lymphedema: these are special products (such as a chin strap, face mask)

Ask your care team for more information. These products are usually only worn at night.

Garments for lymphedema management come in different compression gradients and materials. The gradient of compression is the amount of pressure applied to your arm or leg when you have your compression garment on. It is measured in mmHg (millimeters of mercury).

For lymphedema, the compression gradient generally ranges from **20 to 30 mmHg for the upper body (arm) and 30 to 40 mmHg for the lower body (leg) but can vary with individuals.**

Elastic compression garments can be custom-made to fit properly. There are also pre-made over-the-counter garments in standard sizes.

- Custom made garments are often effective because they provide the best fit, especially for limbs with an irregular shape.
- Over-the-counter products are often easier to put on and allow air flow to the skin. They are sometimes recommended as your first compression garment. Wear elastic compression garments during the day time only.

There are also non-elastic, adjustable garments that can be called an “anytime garments” because they can be worn day or night. Some of these garments are covered by the Assistive Devices Program. Many people like them because they are easier to put on and take off but they are also bulkier than elastic garments.

The staff at the CRS Clinic will work with you to decide which garment is best for you.

When to wear your compression garments

- **For upper or lower body lymphedema**

Wear your compression garment regularly during the day and take it off at night.

- **For head and neck lymphedema**

You may need to wear your compression at night because when you lie down you no longer have gravity helping to drain fluid as you do when you are upright during the day. Check with your therapist and fitter regarding wear instructions for your particular garment.

- **It is very important for most people who have lymphedema to wear their garments** while exercising, during strenuous physical activity (such as lifting or carrying heavy groceries, vacuuming, painting, shoveling snow, mopping the floor, washing windows) and for air travel. Make sure your garment fits well and does not restrict your ability to move easily.

Tips for putting on and replacing your compression garment

- ✓ Keep 2 sets of garments so that you can wear one while the other is gently washed and dried. You can put them in the dryer at low heat to help the elasticity come back. Garments now are made with materials that can withstand the dryer. Make sure to follow the washing instructions that come with your garment.
- ✓ Wear a special rubber glove(s) to help you put the garment on. Tiny amounts of a special gel can also help get the sleeve or stocking on more easily. There are other aids to help you put on compression garments which can be bought where you get your garments.
- ✓ Replace the garment when the elastic wears out. Usually you need to buy a new set every 4 to 6 months.
- ✓ The ADP is a program that covers 75% of the cost of these garments for people who are eligible. You are eligible for ADP funding assistance if you have chronic secondary lymphedema and need a graduated compression garment for at least 6 months of regular, daily use.
- ✓ An elastic garment should be replaced every 4 to 6 months. You are eligible to receive funding for 4 sets of elastic garments in a 12-month period through the ADP program. If you have a non-elastic adjustable garment, you are eligible for one set every 12 months through the ADP program.

How to get ADP

Pick up an ADP authorization form from the Princess Margaret CRS Clinic, or an approved authorizer. An authorizer will assess the exact type of compression garment you need. Authorizers are Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Registered Massage Therapists and Nurses who have registered with ADP. ADP forms need to be redone every 2 years.

Step 1: Get diagnosed by a specialist

You must be diagnosed with lymphedema by a doctor that is a specialist in the area of vascular surgery, orthopedic surgery, radiation or medical oncology, internal medicine, pediatrics, plastic surgery or general surgery.

After the diagnosis, you will need to be examined by a doctor every 2 years. After the initial diagnosis by a specialist, your family doctor can complete the form every 2 years.

Step 2: Decide what type of garment is right for you

This can be done at the Princess Margaret CRS Clinic. If you are renewing your ADP form, you first need to see your family doctor to have the form signed and then make an appointment at the CRS Clinic.

Step 3: Get fitted and buy your compression garments

You can buy compression garments from a vendor registered with ADP. Registered vendors have staff trained in the assessment and fitting of compression devices. The fitter also needs to sign your ADP form. A list of registered vendors is provided in the CRS Clinic or see the contacts below.

For more information about the ADP and authorized vendors:

Phone: 416 327 8804 or 1 800 268 6021

Assistive Devices Program | Ontario.ca

Website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/assistive-devices-program>

- type "ADP" in the search field

Other types of coverage for compression garments

Private insurance

A private insurance Plan may cover the remaining 25% after the ADP. Contact your insurance company to find out more. You may need a prescription from your doctor and the product receipt.

Income tax

You can submit the receipt for your compression garment(s) with a prescription from your doctor along with your annual Income Tax Return, and claim the cost under Medical Expenses.

Exercise and physical activity

Exercise is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Exercise helps to increase lymphatic flow through muscle movement and deep breathing. The rate of lymphatic flow can increase up to 15 times when you exercise. Together with compression bandaging or garments, different types of exercise benefit patients with lymphedema.

Having a healthy body weight also helps to manage lymphedema. Being at a higher weight puts strain on your lymphatic system and affects its ability to pump lymphatic fluid. People with a higher body weight are more likely to develop lymphedema, and usually have more challenges managing lymphedema. Exercise can help to achieve a body weight that is right for you. Talk to your health care team if you feel like you need more support with managing your weight.

Types of exercise

1. Exercises that help lymphatic flow (Decongestive Exercises)

These exercises are done slowly with no resistance or weights. Deep breathing and decongestive exercises serve as the pump for the lymphatic system and improve lymphatic flow. Your care team at the CRS Clinic will show you how to do decongestive exercises along with written information.

2. Muscle Strengthening (Resistance Training)

These exercises are done by increasing weight resistance one step at a time. Together with compression, making your muscles stronger may reduce the amount of swelling in your limbs. The goal of strength and resistance training is to improve muscle power, stamina, tone, and to prevent injuries.

3. Flexibility (Stretching)

The goal of flexibility exercises is to stretch soft tissues to reduce tightness and the effects of scarring, which can block the flow of lymph fluid. These exercises will help you improve flexibility for everyday movement and may also help reduce the impact of treatment-related side effects. Examples include general stretching, gentle yoga, qi gong or tai chi.

4. Aerobic or Cardio (Cardiorespiratory) Training

Cardio training improves overall health and deep breathing improves lymphatic flow. Activities like brisk (quick) walking, biking, swimming, spin or step classes and dragon boating all provide cardio training.

5. Water Exercises and Swimming

The pressure of water against the body helps the flow of lymph fluid and blood. Gentle movements in the water stimulate muscle and skin movement without stressing other body parts.

Visit the LymphNotes.com website: www.lymphnotes.com/article.php/id/24

General tips for exercising safely

Most people with lymphedema can safely do the types of exercise listed above using their affected body part(s) by following some key safety suggestions. If you're not sure, talk to a qualified health care provider.

✓ To exercise safely:

- Start slowly and increase the time and intensity of exercise one step at a time. This will help you avoid injuries like sprains and strains. Listen to your body. If your affected body part starts to feel heavy, full or painful while doing very long or intense exercise, adjust your activity and try some decongestive exercises to reduce the swelling. (Decongestive exercises are easy exercises we teach patients to stimulate the lymphatic system.)
- Wear compression garments while exercising and during the cooling off period.
- Watch for aching or a feeling of fullness during and after exercising. This could mean your lymphatic system cannot keep up and you need to lighten your exercises.
- Avoid or use caution when exercising in the heat.
- Listen to your body and stop exercising if there is pain or when you feel fatigued.
- Watch for any discomfort and tell your doctor if you feel discomfort while exercising.

For more resources and questions about exercising talk to the Princess Margaret CRS Clinic staff.

Prevent and reduce strains from everyday activity

Here are some tips to prevent strain to your arm when you have upper body lymphedema. During your daily physical activities:

- Carry your bag over the non-affected shoulder.
- Use wide straps on handbags and backpacks.
- Wear a bra with wide straps that fits well.
- Gradually build up to carrying heavy items or doing repeated motions with your affected area of your body.

Pay attention to how your body feels when you are doing the following:

- carrying or lifting heavy boxes or grocery bags
- carrying, pushing or pulling heavy suitcases, briefcases or laptops
- vacuuming
- rolling paint on a wall
- using a computer for more than 1 hour without taking a break



It is important to take regular breaks, move your body and rest your eyes when using a computer for long periods of time.

If your affected area becomes more swollen or more uncomfortable, take a break. Talk to an occupational therapist or other health care professionals for suggestions on how to relieve any discomfort or difficulty with your activity.

Exercise programs

Wellspring

- Wellspring is a network of community-based support centres offering programs and services. Wellspring programs are offered free of charge, both in person and virtually.
- They have many exercise programs for cancer patients: personalized cancer exercise program, tai chi, gentle and restorative yoga, exercise, mindfulness meditation, and more.

To learn more and find a program in your area: wellspring.ca

Phone toll-free: 1 877 499 9904

Swimming and aquafit programs

- Good for people with lymphedema
- Both have cardiovascular, strengthening and flexibility exercises
- Follow the tips on “General tips for exercising safely”
- Exercises in the water help to manage lymphedema, reduce pain, and improve movement of the limbs
- Check your community centres for swimming and aquafit programs

Cancer Rehab and Exercise (CaRE) Program

The CaRE Program is an 8-week program that can be done at ELLICSR (a health and wellness space in Toronto General Hospital) or in your own home.

Both programs include:

- A physical fitness test and personal exercise program (1.5 hours)
- Support through in-person or online education is provided once a week. Resource topics include fatigue, managing emotions, mindfulness and relaxation, diet and nutrition, mindful eating and brain health and the importance of being connected.

Ask your CRS clinician if CaRE is right for you.

For more information on exercise and lymphedema

Lymphedema Association of Ontario – Lymphedema

Website: www.lymphontario.ca/Lymphedema

National Lymphedema Network (US)

Website: www.lymphnet.org

Lymphnotes

Website: www.lymphnotes.com

Lymphedema Lifeline Foundation (US)

Website: <https://lymphedemalifeline.org/resources>

Canadian Lymphedema Framework (CLF)

Website: www.canadalymph.ca



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