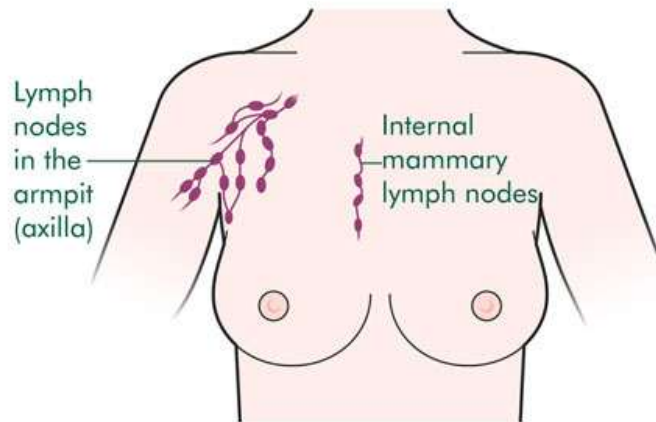


Lymphedema and breast cancer - women

The increase in the size of your arm, hand and/or wrist after treatment for breast cancer is called lymphedema. Lymphedema is the build-up of fluid in your tissues. This build-up of fluid can happen when your lymph nodes are:

- removed during surgery
- damaged from radiation therapy



When the lymph nodes are damaged or removed the drainage of fluid can be blocked. This is what causes the fluid to build up.

The increase in fluid and swelling may come and go. Your arm may ache, feel heavy, stiff and uncomfortable. You may feel some tingling in your arm and fingers. Your clothing or jewellery may feel tighter than usual or you may be able to see the swelling in your arm. You may have a harder time doing some activities. We do not always know why some patients have lymphedema and others do not.

Very rarely cancer recurrence or a blood clot in the affected arm can block lymph nodes and lymph vessels preventing fluid from draining properly. Your doctor may order x-rays to see if this is the case.

This handout describes how to manage lymphedema and prevent problems related to lymphedema.



Below are signs of infection or cellulitis. Notify your doctor immediately if you have any of these symptoms:

- temperature higher than 38° Celcius or 100° Fahrenheit
- swelling with warmth and/or redness
- pus or drainage from any open area on the skin

Avoid infection and prevent injury

To help prevent infection, take care of the skin of the affected arm:

- Keep your skin clean. Moisturize with fragrance free emollient lotion
- If you injure, cut or scrape your skin, clean and protect the wound right away. Clean with soap and water and use an antibiotic ointment.

To help prevent an increase in lymphedema, here are some ways to protect your affected arm:

Medical tests

- Do not have your blood pressure taken on your affected arm
- Do not have IVs, injections or blood tests on affected arm

Personal care

- Push back your cuticles. Do not cut cuticles or hangnails. Do not bite your nails
- Use an electric razor for shaving your armpit
- Do not wear tight jewellery such as bracelets, rings and watch bands
- Avoid pressure on your shoulders with backpacks, purses and thin bra straps

Temperature

- Avoid extreme water temperature changes when washing dishes and bathing
- Use caution with hot tubs and saunas

House and yard work

- Use a thimble when sewing
- Wear gloves with yard work, washing dishes and housework
- Prevent burns: use oven mitts when baking or cooking
- Prevent sunburns: use sunscreen and wear protective clothing in the sun
- Prevent insect bites: use insect repellents
- Prevent pet scratches
- Avoid repetitive arm movements such as painting
- Do not carry or lift heavy items such as a suitcase

Arm exercises

A handout of arm exercises designed to help increase the drainage of lymph fluid from your arm is available from the WFCC Resource Centre.

Deep breathing is also helpful in moving lymph fluid out of the arm. Do these exercises along with deep breathing 3 to 4 times a day. You can do them while you are doing your regular activities such as watching TV.

You may want to consider taking Tai Chi, Yoga, and Qi Gong as these types of exercises help with deep breathing.

You can also follow along with the exercises on the video found at the link below:

The Lymphedema Dance

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TOcxF9feCI&feature=youtu.be>

Maintain a healthy body weight / eat a balanced diet

Being overweight may increase lymphedema. It is very important to keep your weight under control. If you would like a referral to a dietician, you can call the clinic directly at 905-682-6451 or ask your oncologist or nurse to make the referral for you.

Exercise and weight loss often go hand in hand, but be sure to warm up and cool down after exercising.

To help lessen the discomfort and decrease the swelling

- Raise your arm
- If your arm feels achy do not apply heat or ice
- Tylenol plain or extra strength may be used (see directions on the bottle for how much Tylenol to take)

What do I do if I still have swelling?

See your doctor to make sure there are no medical concerns and ask for a referral to a lymphedema specialist (See Niagara Lymphedema Resources on page 6). These professionals can provide therapies and assistive devices to help reduce the swelling. Prescriptions from your doctor are required to access funding from the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) or supplemental insurance if you have it. Please read pages 3 – 6 for information on the services and funding. Page 7 is a referral form to be used to share information between your doctor and the service provider you choose.

Manual lymph drainage

- Increases the flow of lymph fluid and activates collateral pathways
- Can treat many types of swelling associated with surgery or trauma – promotes wound healing

Indications: Edema, lymphedema (primary or secondary), swelling due to trauma, promotion of wound healing, dermatological conditions, obstructive edema

Contraindications: Uncontrolled cardiac failure, renal failure, pulmonary failure, acute infections

Complex decongestive therapy

4 Components	2 Phases
Manual Lymph Drainage	Intensive Phase: consists of the 4 components, plus patient education. Compression is used 23 hours/day
Compression Therapy	
Decongestive Exercise	Management Phase: patient applies practices and principles learned in intensive phase to manage condition
Skin care	

Indications: Lymphedema, primary and secondary. A modified version is used for non-healing ulcers, lipedema, mixed edemas

Contraindications: Uncontrolled cardiac failure, renal failure, pulmonary failure, acute infections. Malignant cancer is a relative contraindication.

Compression garments

Compression sleeves, gloves and gauntlets are the types of compression garments used for arm lymphedema. These garments are made of strong elastic fabrics. They are worn during the day and removed at night. Replace compression garments every 4 to 6 months as they lose their elasticity and do not work as well.

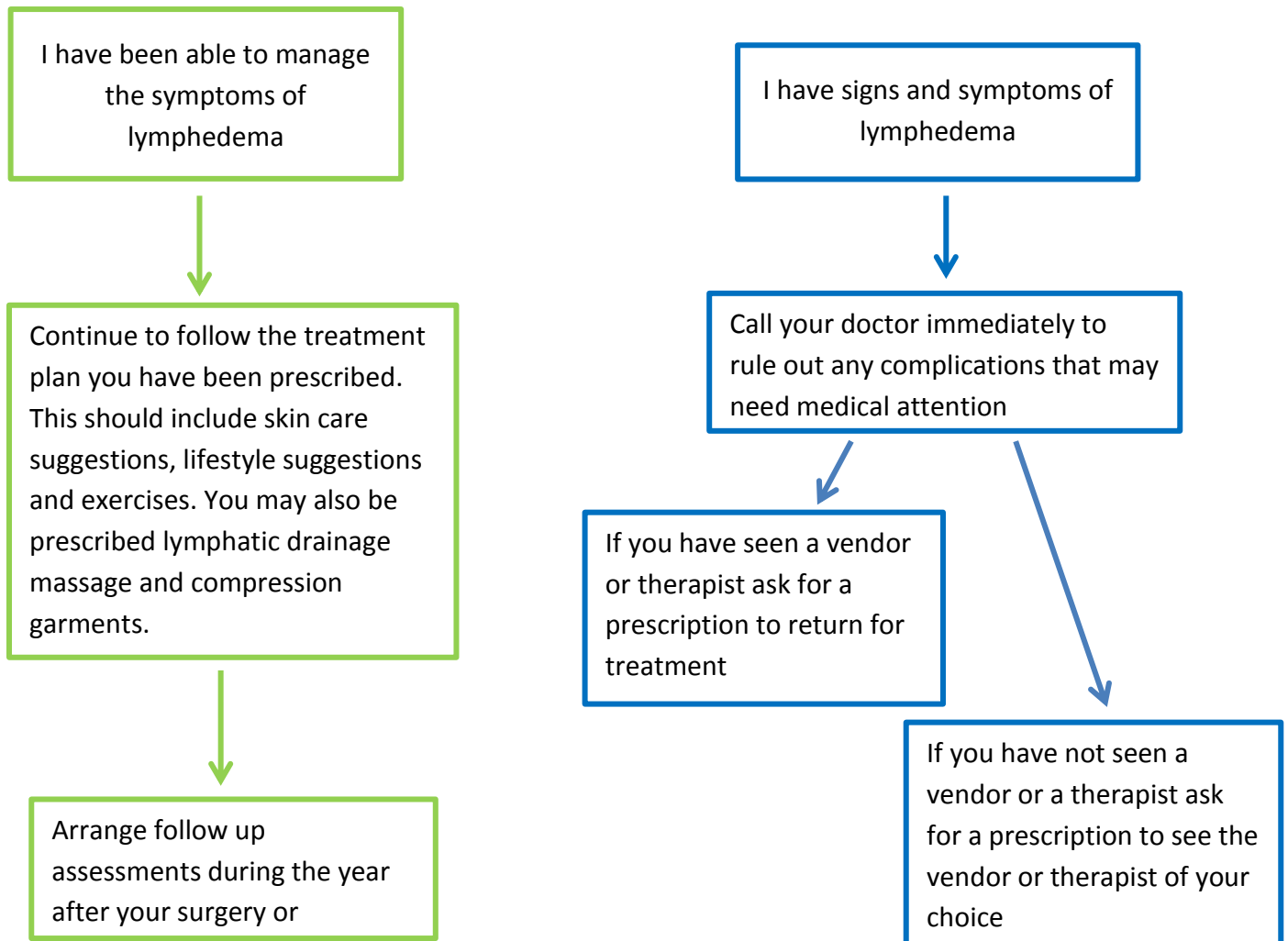
You need a prescription to buy them. They can be expensive and the costs can be shared by accessing the Assistive Devices Program (ADP). Please talk to your health care team about the referral process.

Assistive Devices Program

- Patients with Lymphedema can access the ADP program to receive supplemental funding, covering 75% of the cost of compression garments authorized through ADP. The patient then pays the remaining 25% and if they have supplemental insurance, submits invoices for refund.
- An application is completed initially and every 2 years a renewal is required. See website below for more details:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/adp/pub_adp.aspx#

Care pathway for patients diagnosed with lymphedema



It is ideal to see someone with specialized training in lymphedema management before symptom happen. They can provide more information about lymphedema management. If you have not been referred to a lymphedema specialist, ask your doctor to make the referral. The information on pages 4 and 6 can help you find service providers in Niagara and understand how they can help you.

The **Lymphedema Management Referral** is used to help get information from your doctor to the vendor or therapist who is assessing or treating you.

Please see page 6 for local vendors and lymphedema services.

Niagara Lymphedema Resources

ADP Vendors for Compression Garments

Hauser's Pharmacy (free education/ baseline measurement)	St Catharines	1200 4 th Ave. (Niagara Health System, St. Catharines Site) L2S 0A9	905-685-3030
Niagara Prosthetics & Orthotics Corp. (free education/ baseline measurement)	St. Catharines	547 Glenridge Avenue and 1200 4th Ave. L2T 4C2 (Niagara Health System, St. Catharines Site)	905-688-2553
Pharmx Rexall Drug Stores (Rexall Dell 8212)	St Catharines	105 Queenston St., L2R 2Z5	905-938-5138
Pharmashield Dispensary	Niagara Falls	5400 Portage Road, L2G 5X7	905-356-8482

ADP Authorizers in Niagara

- Susan Tomczuk at Hauser's Pharmacy (905)685-3030
- John Mulligan RMT (905)687-1828
- Vivian Dim at Niagara Prosthetics and Orthotics, Mondays 2-4PM (905)688-2553

Manual Lymphatic Drainage Therapists

- John Mulligan RMT/CLT-LANA (905) 687-1828 john@lymphedematherapist.com
- Cindy Schultz RMT (905)684-6066 clcschultz@gmail.com
- Susan Ryczko RMT/CDT (905)704-1744 susanryczko@hotmail.com

Resources

Websites:

www.lymphovenous-canada.ca

www.cmaj.ca/cmaj/cgi/content/full/164/2/191

www.cancer.ca (search lymphedema)

<http://www.lymphontario.ca/>

<http://www.canadalymph.ca/>

www.sharingstrength.ca



Go with the flow – Lymphedema education and support

Walker Family Cancer Centre – Level One

Join us on the **second Tuesday of every month** for an informal education session that includes demonstration of recommended exercises

Drop in or call 905-682-6451 to register

Lymphedema Management Referral

Patient Name: _____

Primary Physician: _____

Referred by: _____ **Contact Info:** _____

Diagnosis:

Area Affected:

Lymphedema (chronic)

Swelling (acute)

Chronic Venous Insufficiency

Combined lymphedema

Lipedema

Other _____

Right Arm

Right Leg

Right Foot

Other: _____

Left Arm

Left Leg

Left Foot

Doppler done

Suggested Treatment/Service:

- Information on treatment options, garments and available funding
- Massage Therapy: Manual Lymph Drainage
- Massage Therapy: Complex Decongestive Therapy
- Compression Garment

Comments:

