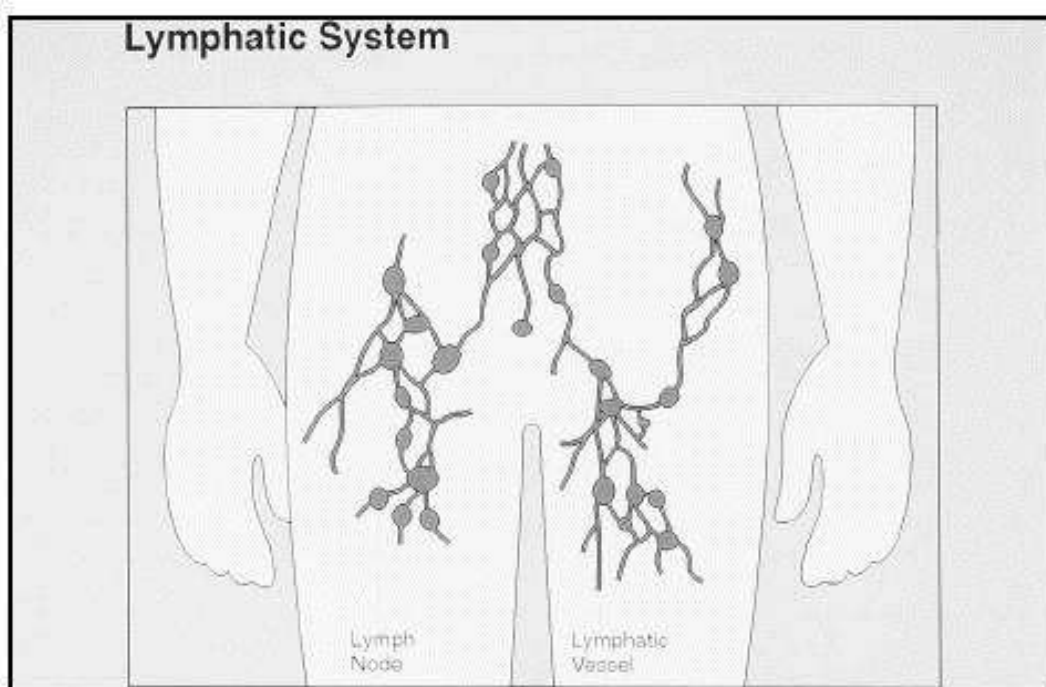


## Lymphedema of the Leg

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



Picture found at: <http://anatomyfornurses.blogspot.ca/2012/09/anatomy-of-effective-blog-post.html>

The increase in fluid and swelling may come and go. Your leg may ache, feel heavy and uncomfortable. You may not have any symptoms at all, but just notice that your leg is bigger. You may feel some tingling in your leg and toes. You may have a harder time doing some activities.

We do not always know why some people have lymphedema and others do not. Very rarely, cancer recurrence or a blood clot in the swollen leg can block lymph nodes and lymph vessels preventing fluid from draining properly. Your doctor may order tests 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 leg:**

- Keep your skin clean. Moisture with scent free lotion or cream.
- 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 leg:**

### **Medical Tests**

- Do not have your blood pressure taken
- Do not have IV, injections or blood tests

### **House and yard work**

- Wear comfortable footwear at all times.
- Prevent burns, scrapes or injury to your leg.
- Prevent sunburns. Use sunscreen and wear protective clothing in the sun.
- Prevent pet scratches.

### **Personal Care**

- Maintain good footcare. Push back (do not cut) your cuticles and keep toenails clean and short.
- Use an electric razor for shaving the leg and avoid shaving the leg.
- Do not wear tight clothing such as cuffs or socks.
- Raise legs above the level of the heart when sitting.

### **Temperature**

- Take a bath in warm water. Do not use water that is too hot or too cold.
- It is best not to use hot tubs and saunas.

## Leg Exercises

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

Doing gentle leg exercises will help increase the drainage of lymph fluid from your leg back into regular lymphatic circulation. Walking, swimming or stretching exercises (such as Tai Chi) are helpful in moving lymph fluid up the leg.

Deep breathing is also helpful in moving lymph fluid out of the leg. Doing your leg exercises along with deep breathing will help to decrease the amount of fluid in your leg. You can do the breathing and exercises as you go about your day such as when you are talking on the phone, standing at the sink or watching television.

## Maintain a healthy body weight

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 swelling:

- Raise your leg slightly above the level of your heart.
- Take Acetaminophen (Tylenol). Follow the instructions on the bottle.
- If your leg feels achy **do not** apply heat or ice.

## 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.

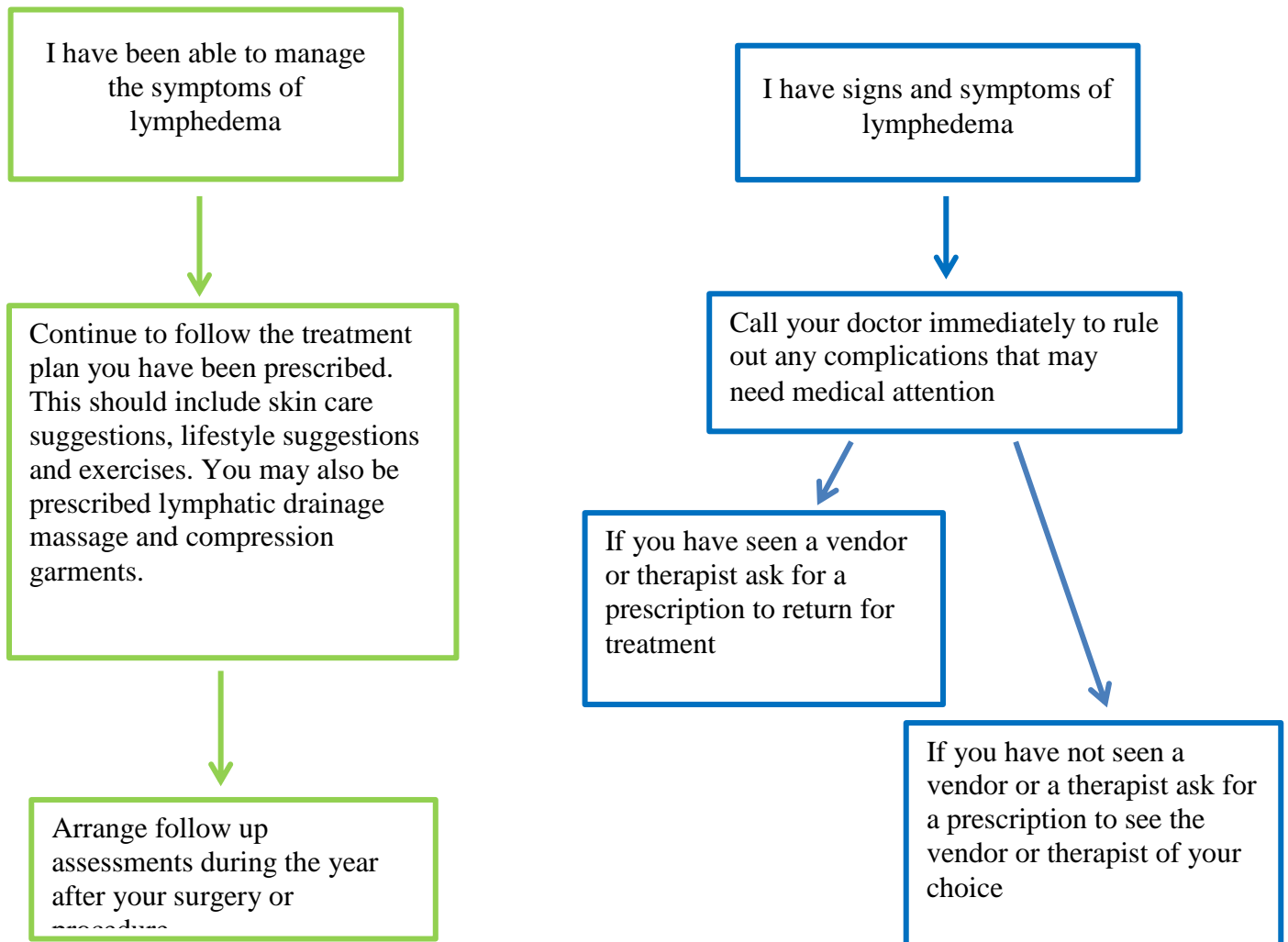
You need a prescription to buy them. They can be expensive and the costs can be shared by accessing the Assistive Devices Program (ADP). Please talk to your health care team about the referral process.

### 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#](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 (p.8)** 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

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

## 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](mailto:john@lymphedematherapist.com)
- Cindy Schultz RMT (905)684-6066 [clcschultz@gmail.com](mailto:clcschultz@gmail.com)
- Susan Ryczko RMT/CDT (905)704-1744 [susanryczko@hotmail.com](mailto:susanryczko@hotmail.com)

## Resources

### Websites:

[www.lymphovenous-canada.ca](http://www.lymphovenous-canada.ca)

[www.cmaj.ca/cmaj/cgi/content/full/164/2/191](http://www.cmaj.ca/cmaj/cgi/content/full/164/2/191)

[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) (search lymphedema)

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

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

[www.sharingstrength.ca](http://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:

This information checklist has been provided for you because you have been identified as having a condition or procedure that puts you at risk for developing lymphedema.

I have been given this information:	YES	NO
Post-operative exercise information		
Who to call if I notice swelling or other symptoms: Dr. _____ Phone _____		
Appropriate lymphedema educational material		
List of Lymphedema Resource providers		
Information about services available from Lymphedema Resource providers		
Information about education sessions available at Walker Family Cancer Centre		

If you have not received all of the information above, please talk to someone on your health care team.

**Notes:**

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The information in this handout has been developed by the team at Walker Family Cancer Centre using resources from Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre, and Cancer Care Ontario  
Revised Sept. 2014

