

Conditions & Symptoms that Benefit from Lymphedema Management

- Congenital conditions causing primary lymphedema
- Complications from surgery and radiation for various types of cancer leading to secondary lymphedema (often present in the neck, chest, arm(s), trunk, leg(s), and/or feet)
- Non-infected inflammatory conditions (sprains/strains)
- Vascular & arterial insufficiency leading to leg swelling
- Sports injuries (joint dislocations, contusions, fractures, & over use syndromes)
- Burns (radiation or other)
- Pre and post surgery
- Chronic Inflammatory conditions (auto-immune)

Lymphedema Incidence

In the United States, the highest incidence of lymphedema is observed following breast cancer surgery. Among this population, 10-40% develop some degree of upper extremity lymphedema. This incidence increases with radiation therapy.

A Turning Point Physical Therapy



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Lymphedema Management

A Turning Pointe
Physical Therapy

Accepted Treatment

What is Lymphedema?

The lymphatic system is responsible for the removal of excess water, long-chain fatty acids, proteins, and waste products from the body cells. Healthy lymph vessels and nodes allow for effective cleaning, filtering, concentration, and recirculation of the lymph fluid. When pathways become blocked, damaged, severed, or congested, lymph fluid can build up in the tissues causing excessive swelling. Built up fluid irritates the tissues and can result in further damage. If this excess lymph fluid can be quickly cleared out of the tissue, there is less risk of internal scarring, prolonged swelling, and the presence of pain. Lymphatic clearing is very effective in speeding tissue healing especially after surgery and radiation.



This is called Complex Physical Therapy (C.P.T.) because many physical therapeutic approaches are combined to produce the results. It achieves the fastest reduction of lymphedema. This is most effective if the individual is experiencing an acute flare-up versus lymphedema present for a number of years. The latter implicates a more complex buildup of scar tissue.

C.P.T. Consists of Five Main Parts

Specialized massage is performed which removes the excess fluid and protein and opens collateral lymphatics so that unaffected regions can drain the affected area. Patients are taught how to perform their own clearings at home to enhance lymphatic efficiency.

Skin care is provided to prevent any infection adding to the lymphatic load and to improve the skin condition. The most important aspect of skin care is scar tissue massage. This massage is done to increase mobility of post-surgical scar tissue and toughened tissue from radiation therapy to allow freer passage of the lymph through these areas.

Other therapeutic interventions can be incorporated including: releasing tightened muscle tissue often due to muscle guarding or tissue injury after surgery, improving posture to enhance maximal drainage of the system, and gait training for individuals with bilateral lower extremity lymphedema.

Compression bandages and compression garment worn on the affected limb to maintain the reduced size and to decrease tissue fibrosis.

Specific exercises are given to supplement the massage and increase lymphatic drainage. (has been shown to increase lymph drainage by 10 to 15X.).

physical therapy

Our Philosophy

is to offer individualized "hands-on care to our clients to:

- 1) Reduce Swelling
- 2) Improve motion
- 3) Improve circulation
- 4) Reduce or totally eliminate pain
- 5) Increase awareness and independence
- 6) Restore mobility, balance, and functional ability.
- 7) Provide resources for complete management of lymphedema