

WHAT IS LYMPHEDEMA?

Lymphedema is a chronic swelling (edema) of a body part caused by an accumulation of lymph fluid as a result of an insufficient lymphatic system.

Lymphedema can occur anywhere in the body where the lymph nodes are removed or become non functional. Unlike other edemas, lymphedema leads to changes in the tissue such as fibrosis and an increased risk of infection.

TYPES OF LYMPHEDEMA

Primary lymphedema is the result of missing or impaired lymphatic vessels due to abnormal lymphatic development. It can be evident at birth, puberty or after the age of 35.

Secondary lymphedema is more common and occurs when lymph vessels are damaged or removed. Factors which contribute to secondary lymphedema can include: trauma, burns, infection, inflammation, cancer treatments of surgery and radiation, tumors, reduced mobility/paralysis, chronic venous insufficiency and obesity.

Lymphedema can affect all ages and can happen to anyone. Lymphedema is a life-long condition that requires life-long management.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF LYMPHEDEMA

- Full or heavy feeling in the affected body part
- Decreased mobility in the affected body part
- Clothing, watches or rings can feel tight
- Tightness in the skin
- Abnormal swelling in the affected body part

If you feel unwell or notice a sign of infection such as increased redness, swelling, warmth or pain to the affected limb, you should be seen by your doctor or emergency personnel immediately.

At present there is no cure for lymphedema; however, it can be successfully managed if diagnosed and treated in a timely manner.

LYMPHEDEMA MANAGEMENT

Treatment is designed to reduce and manage volume and decrease the risk of complications such as increased swelling and/or infection. In addition, life-long self-management is vital for optimal outcomes.

Complex Decongestive Therapy (CDT) is the recommended best practice for the treatment of this condition and is provided by certified CDT therapists.

Complex Decongestive Therapy includes:

- Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) – redirects lymph fluid
- Compression Therapy – compression bandaging and compression garments
- Exercise – activates muscle and joint pump to promote lymph flow
- Skin and Wound Care – keeping the skin clean and using ph neutral lotions
- Instruction on Self-Management

RECOMMENDATIONS

Maintain a healthy body weight.

Good skin care helps to reduce the risk of infection.

Overuse may cause injury—work and exercise in moderation, build up your tolerance and strength slowly.

To control volume of the affected limb during exercise or activity, use compression garments or bandages as advised by the fitter or therapist.

Wear a compression garment when flying to help reduce any increase in swelling.

Consult your healthcare professional for proper diagnosis.

LAM Membership

The Lymphedema Association of Manitoba (LAM) counts on memberships and donations to continue promoting awareness and education about lymphedema for patients, those at risk of lymphedema and healthcare professionals. Your membership includes four issues of *Pathways, Canada's Lymphedema Magazine*, published by the Canadian Lymphedema Framework (CLF) as well as LAM's *Swelling with Emotion* quarterly newsletter.

Name

Address

City

Province/Postal Code

Phone/Cell

Email

For membership and/or donations please make cheque payable to the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba.

Individual \$ 50/year

Professional \$150/year

Fee is subject to change. Please refer to the website for current information.

Donations

Yes, I would like to support the LAM with a donation of \$_____.



The Lymphedema Association of Manitoba (LAM) is a patient focused, non-profit organization founded in 2011. The LAM is working to create awareness and improve access to quality lymphedema information, resources and services across Manitoba. We are committed to improving the lives of people living with or who are at risk of developing lymphedema. There is much work to be done!

Volunteers are welcome. Please contact the LAM for volunteer opportunities.

Contact Us

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Do you have swelling?

Is it lymphedema?

