

Lymphedema (Swelling of the Arm)

If you had breast cancer surgery some of your lymph nodes under your arm may have been removed to check for cancer. When lymph nodes are removed during breast surgery or are treated with radiation therapy, some of the lymph vessels can become blocked. This increases the chance for lymphedema. Lymphedema can cause painful swelling of the arm or hand on the side of surgery. It can develop weeks, months or even years after treatment. Although it can be treated, it cannot be cured. However, there are things you can do that may reduce your risk of getting lymphedema.

Q: What are my chances of getting lymphedema?

A:

Q: How do you check for lymphedema?

A:

Q: What are the signs of lymphedema? Which ones should I report to you?

A:

Q: Are there things I should avoid with the arm that has had lymph nodes removed (i.e., blood pressure, blood draws, shots)?

A:

Q: Are there exercises or activities I can do to try to prevent lymphedema? Are there any I should avoid?

A:

Q: Is there anything else I can I do to avoid lymphedema?

A:

Q: If I get a cut, burn or insect bite on the affected arm, what should I do?

A:

Q: How is lymphedema treated?

A:

Q: What is a compression sleeve? Should I wear one? Do I have to wear it at all times, even at night? What about on an airplane?

A:

Q: Where can I get a compression sleeve? Should I have one made to fit me?

A:

Q: What is manual lymph drainage (MLD)? When is wrapping used to treat lymphedema? Please explain how these treatments work.

A:



For more information on breast health or breast cancer, please call our breast care helpline (1-877-465-6636) or visit our website. Susan G. Komen does not provide medical advice.

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