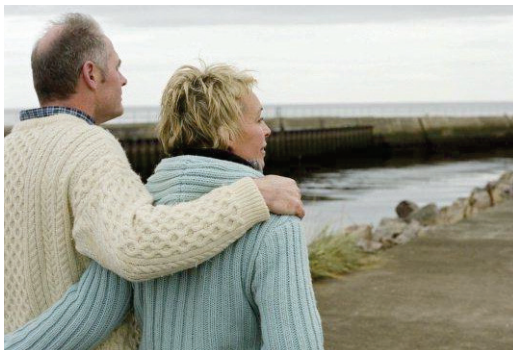


## Managing lymphoedema through physiotherapy

### Lymphoedema: The condition

Lymphoedema is characterised by swelling of certain parts of the body, caused by problems with the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is a network of tubes throughout the body that drains this fluid (called lymph) from tissues and empties it back into the bloodstream. Normally, fluid and proteins leak into the body tissues regularly from the blood. This tissue fluid bathes the cells, supplies their nutritional needs and receives back the products of this chemical process. When this system is not working properly, lymphoedema can occur.

Any part of the body can be affected by lymphoedema, but it tends to target the arms and legs. Around 300,000 Australians will experience lymphoedema at any given time. Women who have undergone mastectomy and radiotherapy for treatment of breast cancer are particularly susceptible to lymphoedema of the arm and, sometimes, the adjacent chest wall on the affected side.



### Signs and symptoms

Lymphoedema usually starts as a painless slow swelling of an arm or leg. As the swelling increases, the limb may become heavy and uncomfortable and more difficult to move. Sometimes infection can occur. With further swelling the limb may become painful and hard and it may be resistant to pressure when pressed.

### Treatment

Unfortunately, there is no cure for lymphoedema. The condition can usually be managed by a combination of techniques which can include:

- compression bandaging to reduce the swelling
- specialised lymphatic massage
- compression garments
- an exercise routine
- skin care

Speak to the physiotherapists in this practice about the treatment options that are available to you.

***Physiotherapists are trained to assess the underlying causes of your injury or condition and provide effective treatment so you can resume your normal lifestyle as soon as possible. Don't put up with pain – if you are suffering from lymphoedema, or with pain following cancer treatment, speak to us today!***

*Physiotherapy is beneficial in the treatment of lymphatic conditions. The physiotherapists in this practice assist patients with pain management, recovery following treatment for cancer and in the management of lymphoedema. Also, why not speak to your physiotherapist about an exercise routine – physiotherapists are well placed to advise you on exercise strategies that will work for you in the treatment of lymphoedema.*

*In terms of cancer control, treatment can reduce complications and therefore length of stay in hospital and reliance on other health services*

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