

Six Things Patients Should Know about Lymphedema

What is lymphedema?

Lymphedema is a chronic inflammatory condition and is characterized by chronic swelling that can occur in any area of the body

- Head/Neck
- Genitals
- Chest wall/breast
- Limbs

What causes lymphedema?

Any condition that overwhelms the lymphatic system

PRIMARY

- Hereditary
- Congenital

SECONDARY

- Obesity
- Venous disease
- Many cancers and their treatments (lymph node dissection, radiation)
- Surgical intervention
- Trauma
- Immobility
- Infection

What are the signs and symptoms of lymphedema?

Some of the signs and symptoms of lymphedema include:

- Heaviness
- Aching
- Swelling

What are the potential complications of lymphedema?

Some complications of lymphedema include:

- Reduced mobility
- Cellulitis
- Chronic pain
- Psycho-social impacts
- Limited ADLs

Can lymphedema be treated by medication?

No medications exist to treat the lymphatic system

- Antibiotics and antifungals are used to treat cellulitis infections

What is the gold standard for treating lymphedema?






There is no cure for lymphedema but treatment exists called Complete Decongestive therapy, including:

- Manual lymphatic drainage
- Skin care
- Exercise and healthy eating
- Compression therapy

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Prevalence of Lymphedema for Canadians

	Canada 1 million for 36 million population*	Ontario 388,920 for 14 million population**
Chronic Venous Insufficiency: Undetermined		
Morbid obesity related	570,000	221,684
 57%		
Cancer related	310,000	120,565
 31%		
Disabilities/chair-bound	83,000	31,114
 8%		
Surgeries (non-cancer)	40,000	15,557
 4%		
Primary lymphedema	20,000	7,778
 2%		

Mean incidence of cancer related lymphedema from systematic reviews

- All cancers: 15%
- Breast cancer: 18%
- Melanoma: 18% lower extremity 3% upper extremity
- Gynecological: 20% uterine, cervical, vulvar
- Genitourinary: 10% prostate, bladder, penile
- Sarcoma: 30%
- Head and neck: 4%

Reference: Shaitelman et al 2015

*USA up to 10 million LE (Stanford) extrapolated to Canada = 1 million. Canadian Lymphedema Framework 2018 **National Census 2016. All numbers shown are approximate



We Can Help

The Lymphedema Association of Ontario (LAO) offers:

SUPPORT by offering information on lymphedema treatment, products, resources, CDT certified therapists, registrants of the Assistive Device Program (ADP) and support groups in Ontario through our toll free information line, email, newsletters and website*



OUTREACH through our website, newsletter, educational events geared to patients, those at risk and health care professionals

ADVOCACY for improved access to treatment and increased health care and insurance coverage

COLLABORATION by strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders, promoting research and contributing to a stronger lymphedema community

*We do not provide medical advice or treatment

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Registered as Lymphovenous Association of Ontario
Charitable Number: 87165 5049 RR0001

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