



LYMPHEDEMA: What you need to know

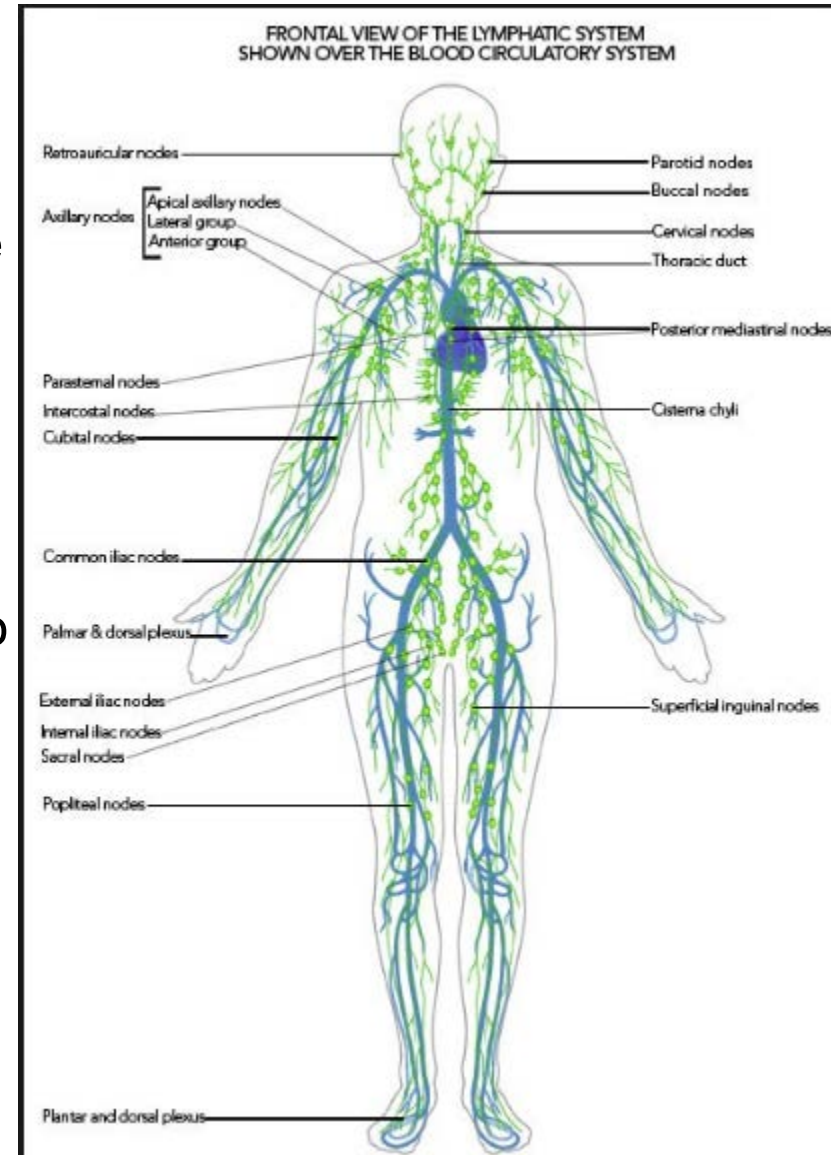
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Contents

- Lymphedema: what is it?
- How does it present/signs and symptoms
- How is it treated?
- Complications of non-treatment
- Do's and don't's of lymphedema
- Frequently asked questions:
 - If I have lymph nodes taken out, will I get lymphedema?
 - Is it curable?
 - Will flying cause lymphedema?
 - How often do I have to wear a garment?
 - Can I exercise?
- I have lymphedema: now what?

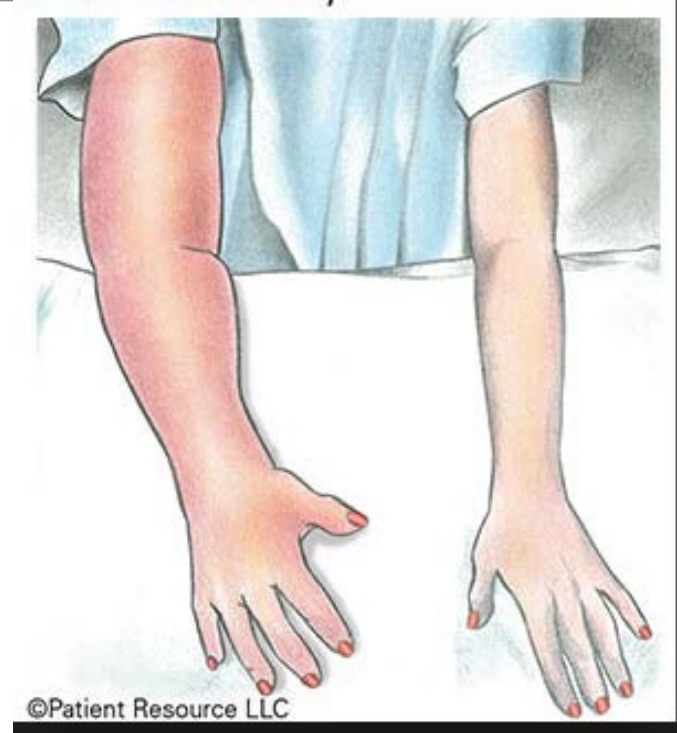
What is lymphedema?

- The lymphatic system is responsible for collecting proteins, fats, and cellular waste products from the tissues and transporting them to lymph nodes.
- The nodes contain infection-fighting cells called lymphocytes that destroy these waste products and return the fluid back to the heart.
- Lymphedema is an accumulation of this lymphatic fluid which can back up into the arms, legs, neck or torso when the lymphatic system is damaged.



Signs and symptoms

- Heaviness
- Difficulty moving the affected limb
- Tight fitting clothing or jewelry
- Puffy or swollen appearance
- Difference in sizes between limbs
- Redness or skin changes



Stages of Lymphedema

Stage 0

- No visible signs of swelling
- Tissue appears normal

Stage 1

- Edema is soft/pitting
- Swelling will wax and wane spontaneously
- Elevation may help

Stage 2

- Tissues may become “hardened” pitting does not occur
- + stemmer sign
- Swelling no longer wax and wanes spontaneously

Stage 3

- Extreme increase in fluid volume
- Fibrosis is present
- Skin changes occur such as papillomas, deep skin folds etc.



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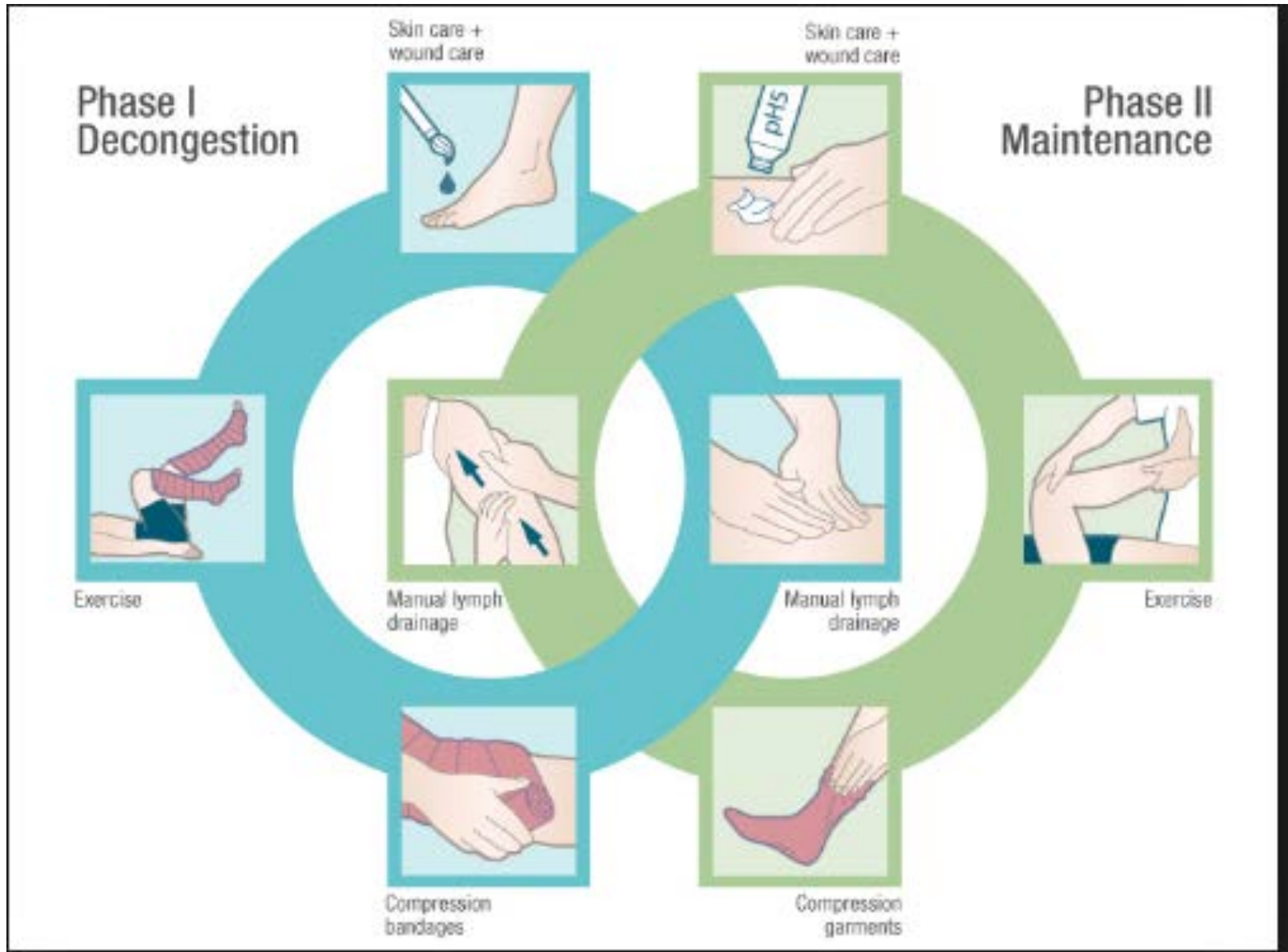


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How do I reduce my risk?

- Risk-reduction practices include:
 - Skin care
 - Activity and lifestyle
 - Avoiding limb constriction
 - Compression garments (If appropriate)
 - Avoiding extremes of temperature

How is it treated?

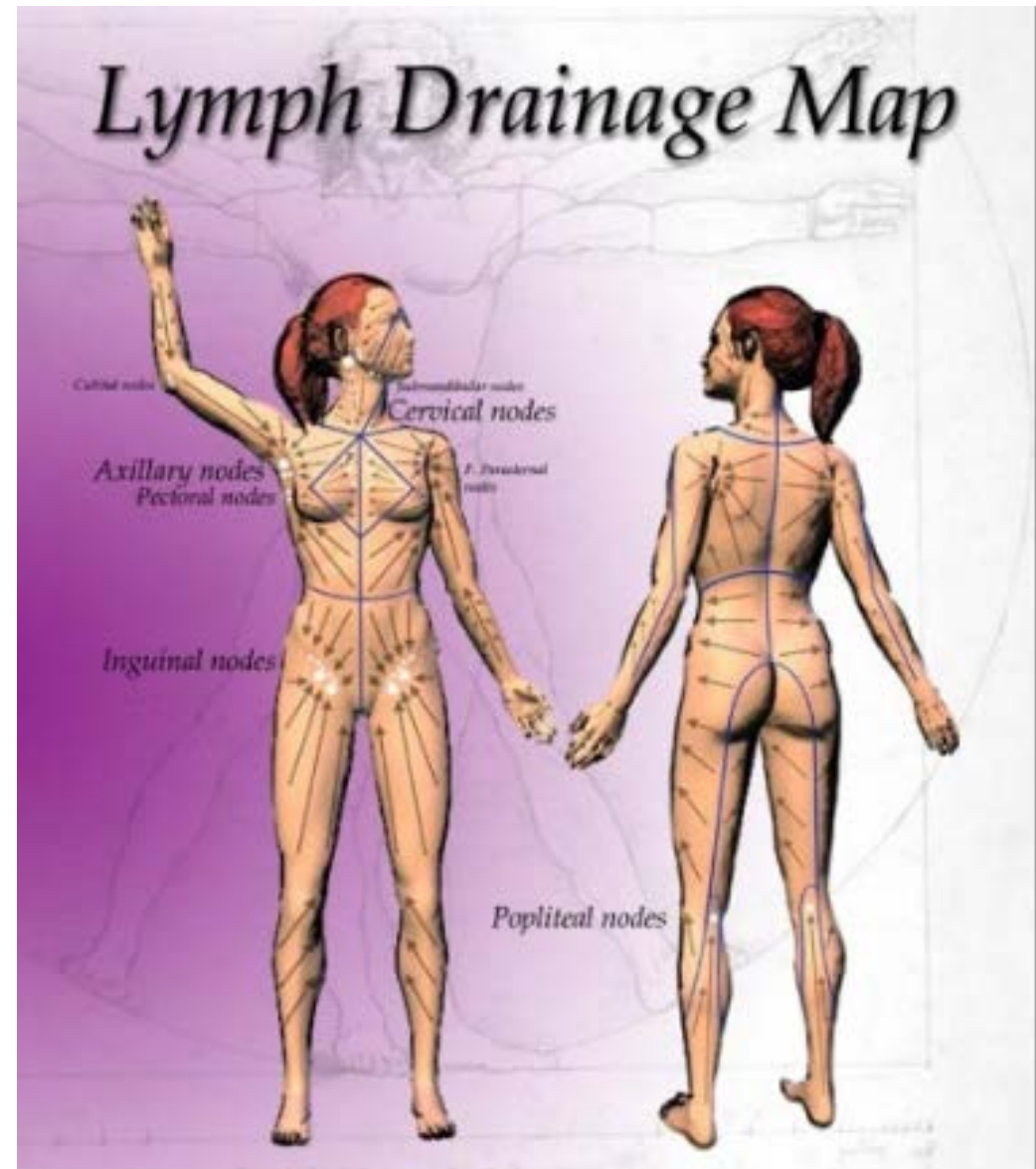
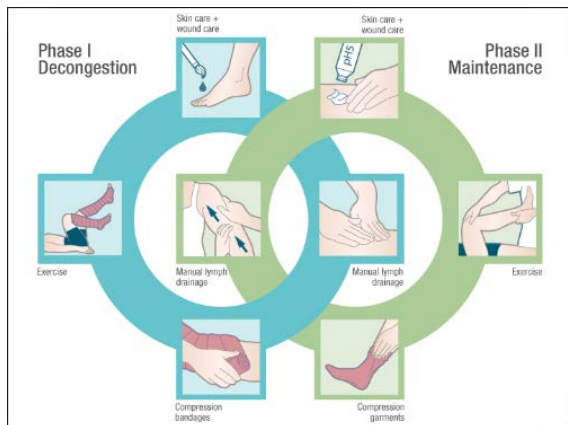


How is it treated?

MLD: Manual lymphatic drainage:

Specialized strokes that moves stagnant lymph fluid to armpits or groin.

**** Demonstration ****



How is it treated?

Compression bandaging:

Lotion

Stockingette

Foam

Short Stretch compression band



** Pass out bandages



How is it treated?

Nail & Skin Care:

Keep nails short & clean

Do not clip cuticles of affected hand/foot

Keep skin hydrated



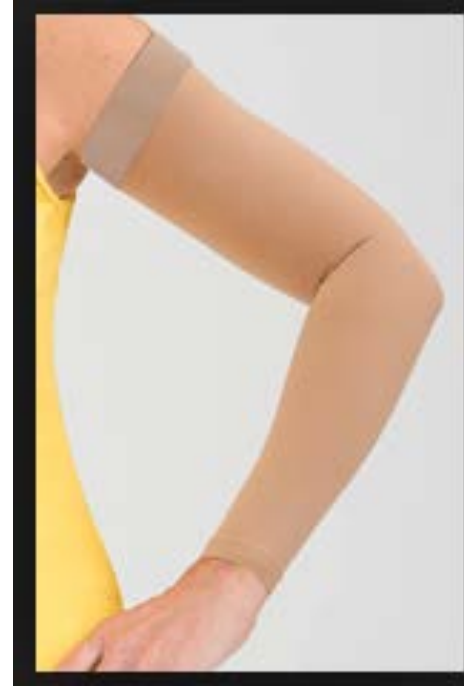
How is it treated?

Compression garments:

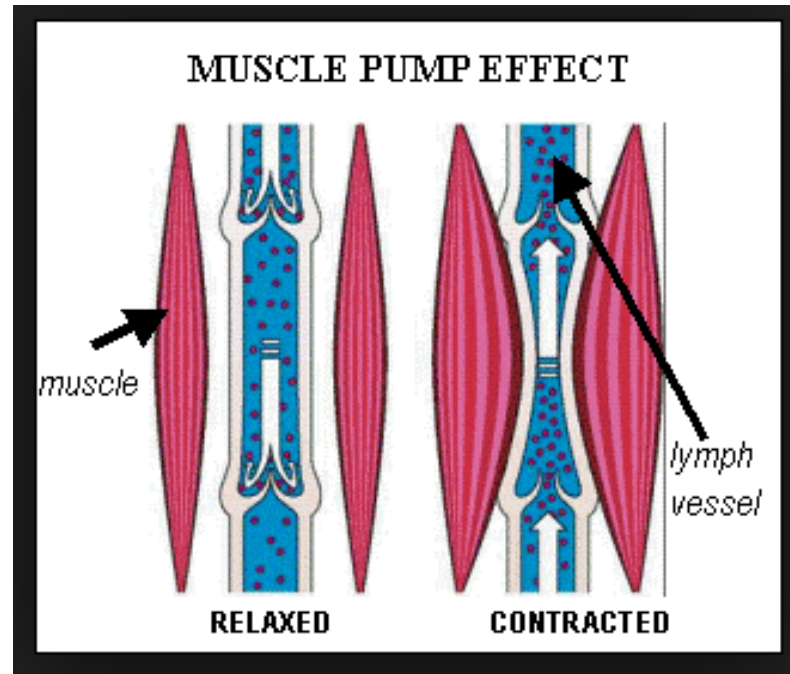
Specially designed to give graduated pressure to bring swelling out of limbs.

Machine washable

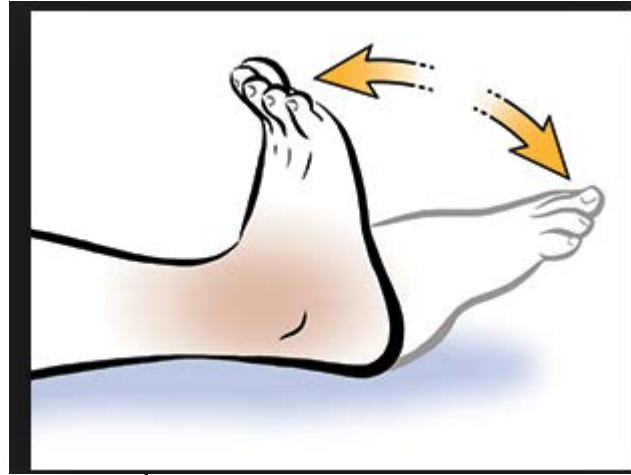
Many different types, textures, colors



How is it treated? Exercise



How is it treated? Exercise!



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Complications of non-treatment

Cellulitis

Permanent skin changes

Wounds



Do's & Don'ts



Do:

- Wear your compression garments daily
- Exercise daily
- Keep skin clean and nails trimmed

Don't

- Damage skin: sunburns, needle sticks, scratches
- Wear tight clothing or jewelry/watches
- Avoid blood pressure taken from affected arm



Frequently Asked Questions:

- Q. If I have lymph nodes taken out, will I get lymphedema?
- Q. Can exercise make lymphedema worse?
- Q. If I fly will it give me lymphedema?
- Q. Is it curable?
- Q. How often do I have to wear a garment?



I have lymphedema...now what?

Referral to lymphedema trained specialist...they will:

Evaluate your skin and swelling

Measure your limb

Establish a care plan that may include manual lymphatic drainage, bandaging, compression garments and exercise.



Questions?



For more information...

- National Lymphedema Network
www.lymphnet.org
- Lymphatic Education & Research Network
www.lymphaticnetwork.org
- American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org
- Lymphology Association of North America
www.clt-lana.org