

Lymphedema

Lymphedema is a condition that may occur after surgery, particularly after breast cancer surgery when lymph nodes are removed or destroyed by radiation.

It may develop soon after an operation or months or years later. It happens when tissue fluids, or interstitial fluids, build up in body as a result of the disruption caused to the lymphatic system by the operation.

The accumulated fluid makes the limbs swell, which in turn affect one's arm or leg movement and may cause infection.

On the other hand, when infection occurs, our bodies fight back by producing extra lymph fluid to combat the infection. But the burden of transporting the additional fluid to different parts of the body increases, creating conditions for lymphedema to develop.

Following are some of the signs of lymphedema which may take between one or more weeks to emerge:

- Heavy feeling in the arm;
- Tight, dry skin;
- Restricted hand or wrist movement;
- Discomfort or pain in the affected limb;
- A feeling that the ring or bracelet you are wearing is tight even though you have not gained weight;
- Difficulty fitting one's arm into a jacket or shirt sleeve.

People with lymphedema should avoid getting infections, getting burned, or straining their muscles. There are different ways to reduce the effects of lymphoma. They include undergoing compression therapy, exercise, draining off the built-up tissue fluid, and skin care. These treatments may take weeks or months to produce results.