

Risk Reduction for Upper Body Lymphedema

What is risk reduction for upper body lymphedema?

Risk reduction is a set of actions you can take to improve or prevent worsening of lymphedema in the upper body region.

Upper Body- this includes any part of the upper back, chest, breast, or any part of the arms and hands.

The list of risk reduction tips below is not all inclusive, you may have additional instructions from your provider. If you are seeing a therapist discuss your risk with them. If your doctor considers you to have high risk, you will benefit from a referral to a Certified Lymphedema Therapist, if you are not already seeing one.

The following could worsen lymphedema:

- Trauma to the upper body
- Infection
- Use of a sauna
- Obesity

Follow these tips to help you prevent worsening of your upper body edema or lymphedema:

Skin hygiene is crucial to maintain healthy skin in order to avoid infection or skin breakdown.

- Moisturize daily if your skin is in good condition, twice daily if your skin is dry or flaky.
- Attention to nail care is important; do not cut your cuticles.

- Apply sunscreen and insect repellent for outdoor activities to protect your skin.
- Clean cuts and scrapes in the affected area immediately to prevent infection.
- Use an electric razor to decrease risk of cuts and scrapes while shaving.
- Complete your home management program as designed by you and your therapist. This includes using your compression garments.

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