

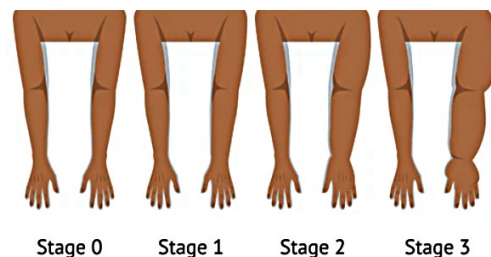
Lymphedema Screening for ALND Patients

What is lymphedema?

Lymphedema is swelling that occurs when there is build-up of lymphatic fluid in the soft tissues. Lymphedema can be caused by any change to your lymphatic system, which can happen through surgery, injury, or radiation. A person can get lymphedema on the side of their body where they had surgery, on their arms, hands, breasts, or torso (chest, stomach, and back).

Why are axillary lymph node dissection (ALND) patients screened for lymphedema?

- An **axillary lymph node dissection (ALND)** is a surgery to remove lymph nodes from the armpit (also called the underarm, or axilla). The lymph nodes in the armpit are called **axillary lymph nodes**.
- ALND patients have a higher risk of developing lymphedema. About 20-30 out of 100 people who have ALND surgery develop lymphedema. Lymphedema can happen days, months, or years after breast cancer treatment, and it can be temporary or ongoing. Lymphedema usually develops slowly over time, and the swelling can be mild, moderate, or severe. Based on the level of swelling, lymphedema is diagnosed into stages 0-3.
- All patients having ALND surgery at Michigan Medicine will receive lymphedema screening (where we measure your level of fluid buildup and swelling) before and after surgery so we can identify any early signs of arm swelling.



What is the lymphedema screening process like?

- The screening is a painless process which only takes about 30 seconds to complete. You'll simply stand on the SOZO[®] machine, which will scan your body to check your current fluid levels in the soft tissues of your arm.
- The measurement from the SOZO[®] machine is called an L-Dex score. This score is used to track any changes in your arm swelling.



When will I be screened for lymphedema?

- You will have your first lymphedema screening before ALND surgery. This gives us a baseline (starting) measurement.
- 12 weeks after your surgery, you will have a follow-up screening.
- We recommend you get lymphedema screening every 3 months for the first year after surgery, every 6 months for years 2 and 3 after surgery, and then once a year for years 4 and 5 after surgery.
- To help you keep track of your screening visits, we will give you a card to track your L-Dex scores and future screening appointments.

Recommended lymphedema screening schedule:

Time:	Screening schedule:
Before surgery	Once before ALND surgery
12 weeks after surgery	Once as a follow-up after surgery
During the first year after surgery	Every 3 months
Years 2 and 3 after surgery	Every 6 months
Years 4 and 5 after surgery	Once a year

How can I reduce my risk for lymphedema?

- Before surgery, the nurse may give you a prescription for a **compression sleeve**. This is something you can wear to help move fluid away from your affected arm to reduce pain and swelling. They may also give you a referral to an occupational therapist, so you can learn more about ways to reduce your lymphedema risk.
- One way to help reduce your risk of lymphedema after ALND is to wear a compression sleeve after surgery. To prevent lymphedema, we recommend you wear a compression sleeve on the arm of your ALND surgery for 12 hours a day (during the day, not at night) for up to 3 months after you complete any chemotherapy or radiation after surgery.
- If your first screening after surgery shows swelling (where your L-Dex score increased more than 6.5 units from your baseline measurement), we'll recommend you wear a compression sleeve for 4 weeks and then have a follow-up screening to see if there is a change in swelling. We will also give you a referral to an occupational therapist. Taking these steps will help you reduce long-term problems with lymphedema.

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Author: Shannon Smith

Reviewers: Melissa Pilewskie, MD, Lela Rasegan, OT CLT

Edited by: Brittany Batell, MPH MSW CHES®

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