

TREATMENT OF LYMPHEDEMA

STUDY IN JOURNAL, CANCER

(April 25, 2008)

Pre-operative assessments of patients with breast cancer by physical therapists allow for **earlier diagnosis and treatment of lymphedema.**

Nicole Stout,
PT, MPT, CLT-
LANA

“Lymphedema is normally treated with more aggressive and often costly and time-consuming techniques, such as complete decongestive therapy.”



“This study clearly demonstrates... that lymphedema can be managed...when diagnosed in its earliest stages...”

Physical therapists



Play an integral role in the prevention, risk reduction, and treatment of this painful, and often irreversible, side effect of cancer treatment

A PHYSICAL THERAPIST'S PERSPECTIVE

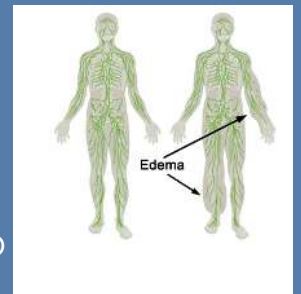
BREAST CANCER RELATED

LYMPHEDEMA CAN CAUSE SIGNIFICANT SWELLING OF THE UPPER AND LOWER EXTREMITIES DUE TO BUILD-UP OF EXCESS LYMPH FLUID.



EARLY DIAGNOSIS FOR SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT:

- LYMPHEDEMA IS A CHRONIC, DEBILITATING AND OFTEN IRREVERSIBLE SIDE EFFECT OF CANCER TREATMENT.
- BREAST CANCER PATIENTS WHO SEEK SERVICES OF A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN REDUCE THEIR RISK OF LYMPHEDEMA.



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TREATMENT OF LYMPHEDEMA

Risk factors

Stout recommends patients with breast cancer be aware of their risk factors and indicators of the onset of lymphedema:

- Being overweight/gaining weight during/after cancer treatment
- Having lymph nodes removed
- Having radiation therapy
- Having an infection or blood clot in the limb affected by cancer treatment

Warning signs

- Aching/heaviness in the limb that was affected by cancer treatment
- A feeling of fullness/tightness in the limb affected by cancer treatment
- Visible swelling that affects the limb affected by cancer treatment



HOW PHYSICAL THERAPY CAN HELP

WHAT YOU CAN DO

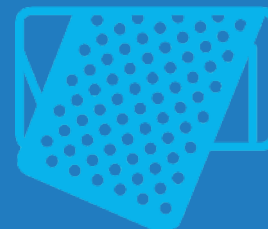
- MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT
- FOLLOW PROPER SKIN CARE AND HYGIENE
- AVOID INFECTIONS FROM CUTS, BURNS, OR SKIN WOUNDS
- EXERCISE SENSIBLY AND AVOID UNNECESSARY STRAIN TO THE LIMB

PHYSICAL THERAPIST SKILLS

- AN EXERCISE PROGRAM WILL BE TAILORED TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND MONITOR ITS EFFECT ON YOUR LIMB
- CAN HELP PATIENTS REDUCE PAIN AND IMPROVE/RESTORE MOBILITY

PROGRAM WILL INCLUDE:

- MANUAL LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE
- GRADIENT SEQUENTIAL COMPRESSION PUMP
- MULTIPLE LAYER BANDAGING
- THERAPEUTIC EXERCISE
- SKIN CARE EDUCATION



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