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facts about risk reduction and early intervention in lymphoedema



1

Identifying risk factors reduces the likelihood of developing lymphoedema

The risk of lymphoedema is increased in those:

- with cancer who have an increased BMI, advanced cancers, high lymph node removal, extensive surgery and complications, treatment
- with chronic oedema from venous insufficiency, trauma, inflammatory conditions or cellulitis
- with other oedemas from cardiac or renal dysfunction.



3

Skin health is integral to the health of the underlying lymphatics

To promote skin integrity and minimise risk of infection, it is important to:

- clean, carefully dry and moisturise skin with an emollient daily
- inspect skin for dryness, cuts and infections
- protect the skin from injury, treat trauma with antiseptic and treat cellulitis early with antibiotics.

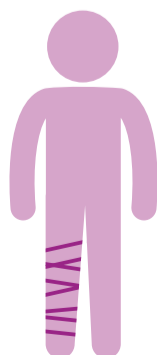


5

Compression can reduce and help prevent lymphoedema

Physios should aim to work out the minimum amount of compression required and consider that:

- some patients with early lymphoedema can be weaned off compression garments
- in combination with compression, manual lymphatic drainage and low-level laser may also help
- the lifelong use of compression garments may be required in some cases.



2

Early intervention can prevent progression to chronic lymphoedema

Evidence supports prospective surveillance for those at risk of breast cancer-related lymphoedema to allow early diagnosis and intervention, including:

- baseline pre-treatment-assessment and regular screening by a lymphoedema therapist
- the wearing of well-fitting compression garments at the first signs of lymphoedema
- education and a prospective monitoring program.



4

Patients with or at risk of lymphoedema should be encouraged to exercise

Both aerobic exercise and resistance training are safe and beneficial and physios should:

- consider a patient's medical history before starting an exercise program
- increase exercise slowly, with rest intervals in place
- encourage hydration and avoidance of extreme heat
- encourage the reporting of adverse effects so the program can be adapted.



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