

Risk Reduction & Safe Practices For Lymphedema Patients

Gay Lee Gulbrandson, CLT-LANA NCTMB www.VodderMLD.com

Risk or Trigger Risk that may trigger / aggravate lymphedema.	Safe Practices Recommendations
<input type="checkbox"/> Constrictive Apparel Allow proper lymphatic flow on skin surface.	→ Constrictive Apparel: Do not wear restrictive clothing or restrictive jewelry i.e. knee highs, girdle, tight bra, elastic cuffs, garter, tight jewelry or rings; use soft pads under bra straps for arm edema.
<input type="checkbox"/> Injections / Blood draws Must not be allowed in affected limb.	→ Injections / Blood draws: Never allow injections or blood draws in affected limb(s).
<input type="checkbox"/> Blood Pressure Cuff Should not be used on affected arm.	→ Blood Pressure Test: Never allow blood pressure cuff on affected limb(s), if possible.
<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Lifting Do not do any heavy or repetitive lifting, work, or weight training (>12 lbs) with affected limb(s).	→ Heavy Lifting: Do not do any heavy lifting. Observe a maximum weight limit of 12 pounds. Do not carry heavy purses on <i>either</i> shoulder.
<input type="checkbox"/> Razor Cuts Use only electric razor incl. under arms, etc.	→ Razor Cuts: Use only safe type electric razor, maintained in top condition, to prevent safety razor cuts.
<input type="checkbox"/> Triggers For Lymphedema Sunburn, bruise, cut, scratch, bite, infection, burn, air travel, etc; all must be prevented. (Also see Skin Care / Cellulitis on Pg. 2) <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-top: 5px;"> <small>NOTICE: This list is not exhaustive. Precautions listed assume patient and caregivers understand and utilize the role of MLD, medication, bandaging, compression garments, regular physician examinations, skin hygiene, and other appropriate individualized treatments & self-care. See WARNING below.</small> </div>	→ Triggers: Use all possible precautions to prevent any abrasion, burn, sunburn, bruise, insect bite (mosquito, bee, flea, etc.), animal bite, cat or thorn scratch, puncture, infection, etc. Blood loss also aggravates edema. Wear gloves for gardening, dish washing. Do not cut cuticles during manicure. See physician immediately if signs of infection exist, or any rash or hot skin feeling, including cellulitis . Such infections can result in rapid death.
<input type="checkbox"/> Temperature Extremes High temperatures must always be avoided. Low temperatures must also be avoided. Rebound swelling syndrome, or cracking & chapping of skin may occur upon return to normal body temperature and increased circulation.	→ Temperature Extremes: All high temperature situations must be avoided including hot showers and baths, sauna, hot tub, tanning salon, hot packs, direct sunlight, infrared or ultraviolet light, peloids, paraffin bath, mud bath, hair dryer (beauty parlor type), and cosmetic heat facials. All low temperature extremes must be avoided, as rebound swelling and chapping can occur.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise & Labor Plan Exercise must be moderated in affected limb. Monitor the affected limb during and after activity for any change in tissue, size, shape, texture, soreness, heaviness or firmness. Rest when fatigue occurs.	→ Exercise Plan: Extreme weight training or rigorous work to the point of fatigue or pain is not allowed (Max 12 lb. lift). Practice light aerobics, bicycle, swimming or walking. Eliminate all extreme stress in affected limb(s) such as heavy repetitive use (scrubbing, pushing, pulling).
<input type="checkbox"/> Deep Tissue Massage Avoid massage or activity causing redness of skin or bruising to the affected limb(s).	→ Deep Tissue Massage: Avoid deep tissue massage / treatments on the affected limb that cause redness of the skin, as this increases blood flow and swelling.

Skin Care / Cellulitis / First Aid

Follow skin care points listed here.

Use common sense to maintain skin health and skin surface integrity at all times.

Smokers: Do not hold cigarette in hand of affected arm. Quit smoking.

Outdoor insect repellent: Consider **Avon's Skin-So-Soft Bug Guard Plus**, or similar products.

WARNING: This CAUTIONARY INFORMATION is not exhaustive, and does not stand alone. All precautions listed here assume the patient and caregivers already understand and utilize the role of CDT, MLD, medication, bandaging, compression garments, regular physician examinations and all other appropriate or necessary individualized care or treatments. Some lymphedema patients should NOT have Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) due to specific medical contraindications. Please consult your physician before having MLD performed. © 2003 Gay Lee Gutbrandson

- **General skin care:** Use oven mitts.
- You may immerse hands in water only up to 102° F.
 - Keep skin clean and dry at all times, always wear gloves,
 - Use **Lymphoderm™** lotion to prevent chapping, cracking,
 - Avoid Pedicure or Manicure in affected limb,
 - All nail care done only by informed & trained specialist,
 - Never cut cuticles, tell Manicurist up front,
 - Use sunscreen (SPF30), non-drying insect repellent.
- Cellulitis:** A potentially lethal, fast-moving skin infection affecting lymphedema patients. Can occur from any wound/ chafing to the skin in affected limb; from ill-fitting or overuse / sleeping in compression garments.
- If redness, itching, pain, rash, swelling, increased skin temperature, fungus, fever, or if flu-like symptoms occur, contact your physician immediately (NO DELAY AT ALL).
- First Aid:** If cut, scratched, pricked, or hangnail, etc., wash thoroughly with soap and water, apply antibiotic ointment, protect wound, watch for infection; seek medical care at first sign of redness/heat/tenderness/swelling, etc.

Elective Surgery / Other Surgery

Avoid elective surgery under most conditions. If surgery is being considered for any condition, bring surgeon into discussion with your lymphedema therapists and physicians.

- **Elective Surgery:** Elective (and especially cosmetic) surgery decisions should always include prior consultations with your physician and MLD therapist, as complications may result that cause lymphedema.
- Other Surgery:** Surgery decisions should include joint consultations with your physician, oncologist, and surgeon, as removal of lymph nodes and other tissues may result in complications in lymphedema patients.

Eat Safely and Properly

Consult physician and nutritionist regarding appropriately balanced diet, with emphasis on whole, live fresh organic food, including protein.

- **Eat Safely & Properly:** Eat a low sodium, high fiber, balanced, fresh live food diet. Maintain your optimal weight. Avoid both alcohol and smoking. Physician and MLD caregivers should be informed of all medications, reactions, conditions, and skin changes.

Air Travel* [Research Filariasis if going to tropics]

If you must travel by air, or drive to high altitude, follow these precautions, and read this advisory: * NLN www.lymphnet.org CLICK **FAQs**, CLICK **NLN Position Papers**, CLICK **Air Travel & Lymphedema**.

- **Air Travel:** If you must travel by air, or drive to / live at high altitudes (over 5,000'), wear appropriate well-fitting compression garments and/or bandages.

Leg Edema Precautions (edited)

If you must stand or sit for long periods, observe these precautions. Elevate legs when possible. Additional care suggestions for **lower extremity lymphedema** are available from Gay Lee via personal consultation request. For more info: www.VodderMLD.com

- **Leg Edema Precautions:** Avoid prolonged standing or sitting; avoid crossing legs; wear proper, well-fitting shoes with good toe protection. Buy special electric razor.
- NOTE: Additional care suggestions for **lower extremity lymphedema** are available from Gay Lee via personal consultation request.

[Live and Learn MLD](http://www.VodderMLD.com)

www.VodderMLD.com