



SHAUKAT KHANUM MEMORIAL CANCER HOSPITAL & RESEARCH CENTRE

LYMPHOEDEMA

Patient Information

Leaflet #: 4-4

**7-A Block, R-3, M.A Johar Town, Lahore- Pakistan.
Phone #: 5945100, UAN: 111-155-555**

What is Lymphoedema?

Lymphoedema is an accumulation of fluid in the tissues below the skin. Long-term swelling of the arm may occur after surgery to remove lymph glands, or radiotherapy to the armpit. ***This swelling can be controlled.*** Symptoms include a general heaviness of the arm, a swelling of the fingers or sometimes difficulty putting on a long sleeve. Sooner the treatment is started; the easier it is to achieve good results.

Less than 1 in 10 who have had either lymph glands removed or radiation to the armpit will develop noticeable lymphoedema. The risk increases to 1 in 3 if you have had both of these treatments.

When can Lymphoedema happen?

Lymphoedema can occur any time after your operation, even up to ten years.

What can I do to reduce my risk?

Use your arm normally for daily activities at home or at work but remember that injuries may lead to infection or swelling.

The following precautions will help to prevent the swelling:

- It is important to keep the skin clean. Wash your skin thoroughly and towel dry skin gently, apply a moisturizing cream regularly.
- If you need injections, or blood taken, ask the doctor or nurse to use your unaffected arm (arm on opposite side to your surgery).
- If you need to have your blood pressure measured, ask the doctor or nurse to use your unaffected arm.
- Protect skin from cuts, scratches, knocks, burns, insect bites etc. Treat cuts and scratches promptly.
- Use hair removing cream to remove hair from your under arm.
- Avoid burns from irons, ovens (use gloves), hot saucepans and dishwashing water.
- If injury occurs, wash the skin thoroughly and apply a disinfectant.
- Consult your doctor immediately if you notice any signs of infection such as redness, heat or pain.

- When you cut your nails do not push back your cuticles.
- Avoid strenuous, repetitive activity such as scrubbing bathroom tiles.
- Avoid carrying heavy weight with your affected arm.
- Avoid carrying a handbag over the forearm or shoulder of the affected arm.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing in fabrics like cotton, linen or wool.
- Wear a bra that fits correctly.
- It is advisable to exercise your arms during travel.

What Should I watch for?

Contact your doctor as soon as possible if you notice:

- Redness
- Warmth of the skin
- Pain in the arm
- Fever
- Swelling of the arms

These could be signs of infection and may need antibiotics. Call the on duty doctor at Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital & Research Centre at:

Ph: 0092 – 42 – 5945100

Ext: 2265

(Try to see the doctor as soon as possible.)

What if my arm aches?

If your arm aches it may help if you:

- Sit down and elevate your arm on a cushion
- Twist fingers and open and close your hand
- Stroke arm towards the shoulder

Contact your Doctor:

- If there is a change in the size of your arm
- If you have feelings of heaviness and aching when doing activities
- If aching continues

Where can I get help?

If you have any queries or problems related to your health, please contact:

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital & Research Centre.

Phone #: 0092 – 42 – 5945100

Ext: 2264, 2265 (Nursing Outpatient)

Days: Monday – Friday

Time: 8:00am – 5:00pm

Early treatment achieves better results!

Reference: CancerBacup (UK)