



## *What is lymphedema?*

Lymphedema is the swelling of a particular area of the body (most commonly the arms and legs) due to an abnormal accumulation of lymph, a clear, colorless fluid that removes bacteria, viruses and waste products from the body. When the flow of lymph is obstructed, it backs up into your body's tissues, causing swelling of the extremities.

There are two types of lymphedema. Primary lymphedema occurs without any obvious or known cause. Secondary lymphedema is more common, and is caused by injury, scarring or the surgical removal of lymph nodes, as is often required for the diagnosis and treatment of many kinds of cancer.

## *How do you treat lymphedema?*

Although lymphedema is a chronic and progressive condition, it can be treated and controlled. The Memorial Lymphedema Treatment Program offers expert care to help you manage lymphedema. The most effective approach is complete decongestive therapy (CDT), which should be started as soon as possible after diagnosis. The length of the treatment, which consists of an active and a maintenance phase, depends on the severity and duration of the lymphedema. Treatment options may include:

- Manual lymph drainage (a form of light massage that moves lymph fluid through the body)
- Compression bandaging
- Exercise
- Skin care
- An elastic garment to be worn once the swelling is under control
- Education for all lymphedema and post-biopsy patients

## *What happens when the active phase of treatment is complete?*

Specially trained therapists will provide you with the self-care skills you need to continue your progress throughout the maintenance phase.

## *What happens when left untreated?*

Skin infections called cellulitis or lymphatic infections called lymphangitis, are possible if lymphedema is left untreated. Both of these can cause further swelling to the extremity and damage to the lymphatic system, which then increases the potential for future infections.

## *What about Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy?*

For patients having Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy (SLNB), we offer a two-day program for education. The sessions cover prevention of swelling, skin care, exercise and other preventive measures.

## *How are therapists certified?*

Our therapists are certified in CDT and manual lymph drainage by Klose Norton Training and Consulting, Inc. They also work closely with the Memorial Regional Cancer Center and are very sensitive to the needs of oncology patients.

## *Will my insurance cover this treatment?*

Most insurance carriers will cover the cost of active lymphedema treatment and education.

## *How can I learn more?*

To learn more about the Memorial Lymphedema Treatment Program, call us at 574-647-1068, or toll-free at 888-284-1068.

The clinic is located at 111 West Jefferson Blvd., Suite 100 in downtown South Bend.

Hours: 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.