

Lymphedema

Lymphedema is a build-up and retention of fluid in the body that presents as swelling. It typically occurs in the limbs but may also be present in the core. While lymphedema can occur for a number of reasons, it most commonly is a side effect of cancer treatment.

What can physical therapy do for Lymphedema?

Physical Therapists who have undergone extensive post-graduate training in the care of lymphedema are uniquely positioned to assist in the management of the issue. UR Medicine / Noyes Health Physical Therapy offers the services of Lymphedema Certified Providers to care for this condition. While lymphedema is not curable, properly trained physical therapists are able to decrease the swelling and educate patients in self-management, greatly reducing discomfort and increasing function.

Common treatments for Lymphedema

Manual Lymph Drainage: A gentle manual treatment that re-routes the lymph flow around the blocked areas into more centrally located healthy lymph vessels. The therapist gently rubs, strokes, or pushes the skin in directions that follow the structure of the lymphatic system so the accumulated lymph fluid can drain through proper channels.

Compression Bandaging: In order to prevent the re-accumulation of fluid following manual lymph drainage, it may be necessary to apply sufficient compression to the affected area through the use of short stretch bandages.

Compression Garments: Once the extremity has been decongested, a custom-fit or over-the-counter compression garment may be necessary to maintain control of the swelling. Compression garments are worn at all times to maintain edema reduction.