



PATIENT EDUCATION

Lymphedema awareness during and after radiation

A plain-language guide for patients and families. Bring this to your visit. It does not replace advice from your clinician.

What is lymphedema?

Lymphedema is swelling that happens when lymph fluid does not drain well. It can follow lymph-node surgery, radiation to node regions, infection, or a clot. It is not “just weight gain.” Early care protects comfort and function. This handout is awareness — not a full therapy program.

What you may notice

- A heavier arm, hand, breast, leg, or groin on the treated side
- Rings, sleeves, or shoes that suddenly feel tight
- Aching, tightness, or skin that pits when pressed
- Repeated infections (cellulitis) in that limb

What you can do now

Protect the skin — treat cuts promptly, moisturize intact skin, and do not ignore redness. Use the limb; gentle use is better than leaving it still. Ask before you start a tight sleeve, wrap, or airline compression you bought online. Blood pressure cuffs, IVs, and needlesticks on an at-risk arm are often avoided — wear a reminder if that applies to you.

Where CureRays may fit. If one limb swells suddenly, that can also be a clot. Call the same day. Your team can examine you, rule out urgent causes, and refer to a certified lymphedema therapist when needed. Confirm exercises and garments with that therapist — not a general video.

How radiation relates

Radiation to node basins can add to surgical risk. The team still treats nodes when cancer care requires it. Knowing the signs means you can get help early rather than waiting for severe swelling.



Practical tips

- **Skin.** Nail care without cutting cuticles. Gloves for yard work if an arm is at risk.
- **Heat.** Saunas and very hot tubs can worsen swelling for some people — ask.
- **Flights.** Ask your therapist before you buy a sleeve “just in case.”
- **Weight.** A healthy weight, if reachable, often helps drainage. No crash diets.

When to call the clinic

- Sudden swelling of one limb, chest pain, or shortness of breath
- Red, hot, painful skin or fever — possible infection
- New heaviness after a bug bite, cut, or sunburn on that side
- A garment that cuts in or causes fingers or toes to change color

Questions to ask

- Is my risk high, medium, or low given my surgery and radiation field?
- Which arm or leg should we protect from IVs and blood pressure cuffs?
- When should I see a lymphedema therapist — now or only if swelling starts?
- What does early swelling look like on my skin tone?

How to schedule or learn more

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