

Common Questions asked by patients about Lymphedema

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Q. 1 What is lymphedema?

Ans. Lymphedema is a chronic swelling usually of a limb caused due to lymphatic failure / impairment either from a congenital abnormality or due to damage to the lymphatic system (lymph node dissection in cancer patients)

It is a very common among cancer patients & a serious condition if not receive early intervention & left untreated by lymphedema specialist

Q. 2 What are types of Lymphedema?

Ans. Lymphedema is of two types. 1) Primary / Congenital lymphedema & 2) Secondary lymphedema

Q. 3 How does lymphedema occur?

Ans. It occurs if the transport capacity of the lymphatic system has fallen below the normal lymphatic load, resulting in an abnormal accumulation of proteins rich fluid principally in the subcutaneous tissues.

Q. 4 Why lymphedema is a serious condition?

Ans. Because it is a slowly progressive condition. Following complications do occur in untreated cases – fibrosis, cellulitis, lymphangitis, lymphorrhea, cosmetic disfigurement, skin fold & in rare case angiosarcoma also can occur

Q. 5 What are stages of lymphedema?

Ans. Stage 0 (pre stage): - No visible swelling despite impairment in lymphatic system

Stage 1 (Reversible) – Swelling is pitting & no secondary skin changes

Stage 2 (Spontaneously irreversible) – Fibrosis is present

Stage 3 (Lymphostatic elephantiasis) – Skin breakdown, skin folds, increase in limb size & frequent infections are present

Q. 6 What are severity of lymphedema?

Ans. Lymphedema can be mild, moderate & severe lymphedema depending upon limb girth & volume difference

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Q.7 Is lymphedema curable condition?

Ans. No, lymphedema is not curable as damage in lymphatic system is not regeneratable but it can be reversible & manageable condition

Q. 8 What are treatment options?

Ans. Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) is known as gold standard treatment for lymphedema globally. It is a result oriented, scientifically proven therapy for lymphedema worldwide. It has many components.

Q. 9 How do you decide about CDT components for effective outcome in lymphedema?

Ans. Treatment may vary from person to person depending upon severity & stage of lymphedema. Quality of treatment service & effective outcome depend upon quality of assessment.

Q. 10 Why lymphedema happened to me only not my friend who also had breast tumor?

Ans. You are not alone. It is a common complication seen among breast cancer survivors. Some may develop it immediate post treatment & few may suffer from this condition later in life. It usually develops within 3 years post treatment in majority of cases. Every patient is unique. Detecting breast tumor in early stages, early intervention with quality of service, education of patients about lymphedema & keeping ideal body weight...etc help in preventing lymphedema in some cases.

Q. 11 Is treatment of lymphedema cost effective or expensive?

Ans. Treatment of lymphedema is a cost effective for patients who take early intervention follow instructions as suggested by lymphedema expert. It may become expensive if you allow this condition to progress to more severity as severe ISL stage 3 lymphedema can't be reversible fully in most cases.

Note - Home visit service with prior appointment can be done in Mumbai & Navi Mumbai area. Goal is to make patient & family member self-dependent in lymphedema treatment in minimum number of therapy session.

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