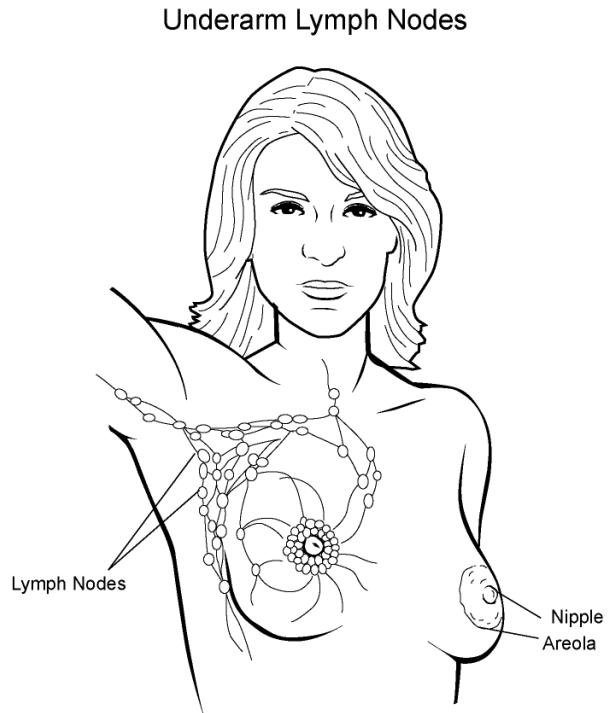


Care of Your Arm After Lymph Node Removal (Female)

The lymphatic system helps get rid of waste products from your cells and helps your body fight infection. Some lymph nodes, a part of your lymphatic system, were removed during surgery. It is important to take special care of your arm to help reduce the risk of a problem called lymphedema (lim-fe-dee'-ma). Early signs of lymphedema may include a feeling of heaviness, tightness, aching or fatigue in your arm. Swelling may or may not be present.



Skin and Arm Care

- Keep your arm clean and dry. Use a low pH (between 4 to 6) lotion each day that is free of perfumes and dyes to prevent dryness. Below is a list of lotions with their pH Level.

Name	pH Level	Name	pH Level
Cerave Lotion	5.68	Eucerin Original Dry Skin Therapy Lotion	5.97
Aveeno Daily Moisturizing Lotion	5.82	Cetaphil Daily Advance Ultra Hydrating Lotion	5.65
Vaseline Intensive Rescue Skin Protectant Body Lotion	4.30	Aquanil Lotion	5.19

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

- When possible, do not have your blood pressure taken in your affected arm.
- When possible, do not have injections, blood draws, or an intravenous (IV) line placed in your affected arm.
- A certified lymphedema therapist may fit you with a compression sleeve. It is important that your compression garment fits correctly and you wear it as directed.
- **Do not** cut your cuticles when you trim your nails.
- Use sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) and insect repellent to protect your arm from sunburn and insects bites.
- Be careful when you use a razor to prevent nicks and skin irritation. It may help to use an electric razor when you shave.
- Protect your skin when you garden, clean or wash dishes. It may help to wear gloves and long sleeves.
- **Do not** wear tight jewelry (bracelets and rings), tight clothing or elastic bands on your affected fingers, hand or arm.
- If you get a scratch, bite, burn or break in your skin, wash the area at once with soap and water. Cover the area with a bandage to keep it clean and to protect it from infection. Check at least once a day to make sure it is healing well.
- Trim your pet's nails often to decrease your risk of being scratched.
- Check your arm for any changes or breaks in your skin. It may help to use a mirror to check areas that may be hard to see.
- Stay away from extreme cold and heat, such as hot tubs and saunas. **Do not** put your arm in water that is above a temperature of 120° degrees Fahrenheit (48.9 degrees Celsius).

Lifestyle and Activity

- If told to do so, wear your compression garment (sleeve) during strenuous activity, such as exercising or air travel.
- Do not use shoulder straps to carry heavy handbags or luggage.
- Exercise and physical activity can help to reduce swelling.
 - ▶ Choose activities that help improve circulation, such as walking, biking, swimming or dancing.
 - ▶ Take breaks during activity to let your arm rest.
 - ▶ Start slowly and increase your activity over a period of time.

- If an activity causes your arm to swell, then it may not be an activity you should do right now. A physical therapist or certified lymphedema therapist can help you find the best exercises and activities to keep your arm strong and healthy.
- Be careful when you lift objects greater than 15 pounds. Do not lift things repeatedly. **Always follow the lifting precautions given to you by your health care team.**
- Try to keep an ideal body weight by eating a balanced, low-fat, low-salt diet.

Call your doctor if you:

- **Seriously injure your arm**
- **See signs of infection which may include:**
 - ▶ Chills or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
 - ▶ Pain
 - ▶ Arm is warm to the touch
 - ▶ Redness or change in color
 - ▶ Swelling
 - ▶ Drainage that smells bad

It is important to check your arm each day and to call your doctor right away if you have any of these problems.

Other Ways to Protect Yourself

You may be unable to prevent having procedures done to your affected arm, but it is helpful to reduce the risk of injury to your arm when you can. Wear a medical “alert” bracelet or necklace to let health care workers know that special precautions are needed to care for your arm. For more information about medical jewelry, you may find it helpful to call one of the following:

- **National Lymphedema Network** (www.lymphnet.org) at 1-800-541-3259 or 510-809-1660
- **Medic Alert** (www.medicalert.org) at 1-800-432-5378

When you are at The James, you will be asked to wear a pink band on your affected arm. This pink band reminds your health care team members that your arm needs to be protected.

For more information on lymphedema, ask for the patient education handout, [Lymphedema and Treatment Options](#).

Lymphedema Clinic

A special clinic to help with lymphedema is located in The Stefanie Spielman Comprehensive Breast Center, 1145 Olentangy River Road, Columbus, OH 43212. Physical Therapy is covered by most insurance plans. You will need a doctor's order for this service. You may make an appointment at the Lymphedema Clinic by calling (614) 293-0043.

The Lymphedema Clinic offers the following treatments:

- Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD massage)
- Skin care
- Specialized compression bandaging
- Measurement / fitting of compression garments
- Patient specific exercises