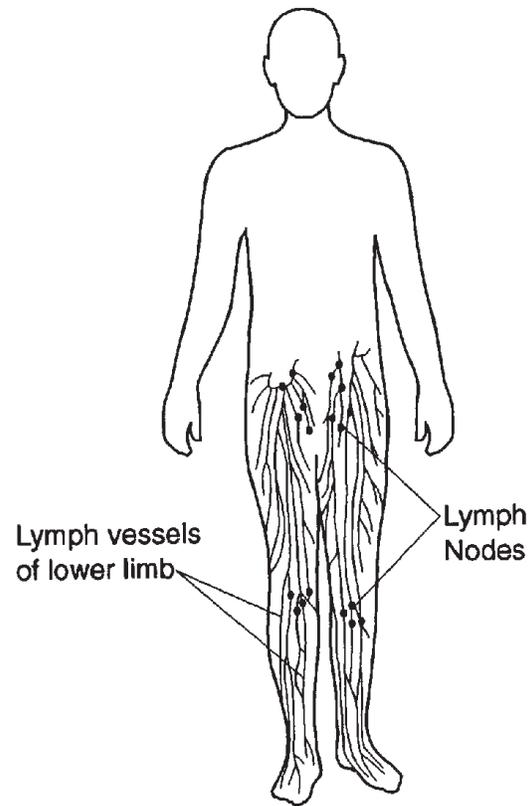


Care of Your Leg After Lymph Node Removal

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



Reduce the Risk of Swelling

- Physical activity and stretching can help to increase the circulation in your lymph system:
 - ▶ **Check with your doctor before you start an exercise program.** Ask if there are any special precautions you should follow.
 - ▶ Do not stand or sit in one place for a long time. Do not cross your legs when you sit.
 - ▶ Choose activities that help improve circulation, such as walking, biking, swimming or dancing.

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

- ▶ Exercise 20 minutes each day, 4 times each week. If told to do so, wear your compression garment when you exercise.
 - ▶ Start slowly and increase your activity over a period of time.
 - ▶ Heat and humidity may increase your swelling. It is better to exercise when it is cooler.
 - ▶ If an activity causes swelling in your leg, then it may not be an activity you should do right now. A physical therapist can help you find the best exercises and activities to keep your leg strong and healthy.
- **Obesity can increase the chance of swelling**
 - ▶ Eat a diet high in fiber and low in fat.
 - ▶ To prevent a buildup of fluid in your body, stay away from foods high in salt.
 - ▶ Drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day to stay hydrated.

To Reduce the Risk of Infection and Protect Your Skin

- **Do not do anything that may cause swelling or infection in your leg or foot:**
 - ▶ Keep your leg clean and dry. Use a low pH lotion (between 4 to 6) every day 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

- ▶ To protect your leg from the sun, use sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) and cover your leg when outside.
- ▶ Use insect repellent.
- ▶ Wear shoes when outdoors.

- ▶ Do not wear tight stockings, shoes or elastic bands around your affected leg.
- ▶ Do not have your blood pressure taken in your affected leg.
- ▶ Do not have injections, an intravenous line (IV) or blood draws in your affected leg.
- ▶ If you get a cut, scratch, bite, burn or any break in your skin, wash the area at once with soap and water. Cover the area with a bandage to keep it clean and protect it from infection. Check at least one time each day to make sure it is healing well.

Call your doctor if you:

- **Seriously injure your leg**
- **See signs of infection which may include:**
 - ▶ Pain
 - ▶ Leg is warm to the touch
 - ▶ Redness
 - ▶ Increased swelling
 - ▶ Drainage that smells bad

It is important to check your leg each day for any of these problems. If you have 2 or more of these problems, call your doctor right away.

Other Ways to Protect Yourself

You may not be able to prevent having procedures done to your affected leg, but it is helpful to reduce the risk when you can. You may find it helpful to wear medical “alert” bracelets or necklaces to let health care workers know special precautions are needed for your leg. 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 leg. This pink band reminds your health care team members that your leg is at risk and needs to be protected.

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, or stop by after your doctor visit.

The Lymphedema Clinic offers the following treatments:

- Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) massage
- Skin care
- Specialized compression bandaging
- Lymph drainage exercises
- Measurement and fitting of compression garments
- Physical therapy