

Useful tips to reduce your risk of developing lymphoedema

Be careful in the sun. Use sun protection with SPF 50 outdoors.

- Try to avoid excessively hot or cold baths and showers as this increases the likelihood of swelling.
- Use natural skincare products where possible with low pH.
- Cellulitis is an infection of the skin. **Be alert to it as infection** can increase your risk of developing lymphoedema. Symptom include:
 - Fever
 - Swelling
 - Redness
 - Pain
 - High temperature



If you get any of these symptoms in your affected arm, leg, breast or head and neck consult your GP (family doctor).

See the section on cellulitis for more information.

Taking care of your scar

Scars are normal after surgery but they can become tight and uncomfortable.

Gentle stretches and movement will help scars to feel less tight. Gentle massage will also help after the scar is fully healed, which is normally 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery. It also helps to use moisturisers on the scar to help soften the area after a massage.

If your scar is causing pain or limiting your movement ask to be referred to a physiotherapist.

Taking care of your scar

Open skin can act as an entry point for infection.

- Avoid getting cuts, scratches and burns by using oven gloves and gardening gloves. Have antiseptic cream and a basic first aid kit on hand just in case.
- Consider using an electric razor rather than a bladed razor for hair removal and take care not to cut your cuticles when cutting your nails.
- If possible, avoid injections or blood tests on the affected arm or leg.
- If possible, have your blood pressure taken on the opposite arm to the one with lymphoedema.
- Do not wear tight jewellery or clothing that causes marks or indentations on your skin on the affected side.

If you must have an injection in an at-risk arm or leg, use antiseptic and watch for signs of infection in the following days.

If both of your arms or legs are at risk, then discuss it with your oncology team or lymphoedema therapist to decide if using an at-risk limb is a reasonable option or not.

Acupuncture

There is no evidence that acupuncture causes lymphoedema but needle insertion does break the skin barrier. Ask your acupuncturist if they can use a different arm or leg to create the same acupuncture effects.

