

RISK REDUCTION

Below are general categories to consider for reduction of risk of lymphedema, followed by more specific actions one can take to lower the risk of triggering lymphedema or limiting the extent of lymphedema if it is already present. Note that these suggestions apply to the region of the body at risk for lymphedema.

Infection Prevention:

- See the infection prevention handout provided by Olympic Sports & Spine
- Keep skin clean, dry and well-moisturized
- Wear gloves or cover feet during activities such as gardening, yard work, around the kitchen or for general housework
- Use electric razors rather than safety razors when possible
- Use sunscreen and insect repellent

Constriction:

- Avoid having blood pressure checked on the at-risk side
- Avoid tight bra straps or heavy breast prostheses
- Avoid constriction from tight clothing in the at-risk part of the body
- Don't wear tight jewelry
- Avoid use of heavy pocketbooks or knapsacks

Tissue Injury:

- As much as possible avoid bruises, strains, sprains or sunburns
- Limit highly repetitive activities and avoid lifting heavy objects, if at all possible
- Modify physical activity by lightening the load and adding rest breaks
- Don't allow needle sticks in the at-risk side.

Temperature Extremes:

- Don't use heat packs on the at-risk part of the body
- Don't use hot tubs or saunas
- Avoid overheating during hot weather
- Use only moderately cold ice packs after injury and limit use to 5 minutes or less

Airplane Flights:

- If you are at risk but don't yet have lymphedema, consult with your therapist about use of a compression garment
- If using a garment, be sure it still has effective compression (garments generally have a 4-6 month effective life span, though they may still feel tight)
- When flying you may consider augmenting the compression level in your garment with a short-stretch bandage or with a second, lighter compression garment
- When you can, periodically get up to walk around, exercise, do gentle range-of-motion exercises