



Skin Care

Looking after and protecting your skin is a very important way of preventing injury and infection. Any break in the skin can make you more likely to get an infection there.

Lymphoedema can cause your skin to become dry and itchy, making cracks and breaks more likely. This can increase the risk of infection but can usually be prevented by moisturising often. You can buy moisturising creams from your local chemist or get them on prescription from your doctor. Your lymphoedema specialist can suggest which creams might be best for you.

How to reduce the risk of infection

Here is some advice about reducing the risk of infection if you have, or are at risk of, lymphoedema:

- Keep your skin clean and dry. Use soap free cleansers that do not dry your skin.
- Wash the affected area every day, dry carefully between fingers toes and skin folds to reduce the risk of fungal infections.
- Moisturise every day with un-perfumed cream to help your skin stay in good condition.
- When applying moisturiser, the last stroke should be downwards (in the direction of the hair growth) to prevent the moisturiser blocking the hair follicles (folliculitis).
- Treat even small cuts and grazes straight away. Wash and dry the area thoroughly, apply antiseptic cream and cover if necessary.
- If possible, avoid having needle put into your affected hand/arm or foot/leg when you have blood taken, injections, vaccinations, a drip (infusion), or acupuncture. Although there is no strong medical evidence to support this, most lymphoedema experts think it is a wise precaution to take to reduce the risk of infection.
- Keep the skin of the swollen area protected from sunburn.
- Use electric razors when shaving to avoid cuts
- Do not use waxing or sugaring to remove unwanted hair this can cause damage to the skin.
- Take care when cutting nails, use nail clippers where possible to prevent damage to the surrounding nail area.
- Do not take hot baths or use saunas as this can make the swelling worse.



St Luke's

Lymphoedema

- Avoid wearing tight jewellery or clothes that may affect the fluid flow from the affected area.
- Do not do continuous repetitive exercises/tasks for long periods as this may increase the swelling.
- Try to avoid carrying heavy loads.
- See you GP straight away if you think you may have an infection.