



AVOIDING LYMPHOEDEMA

You may be aware that a very small percentage of people who have been treated for breast cancer might, at some time, develop swelling of the arm. This is known as 'Lymphoedema'.

Experience has shown that patients who observe a few simple, common sense guidelines as set out in this leaflet, can do much to further reduce the already small risk.

Advice for Patients following Surgery to the Breast and Axilla (Armpit)

- 1 Avoid carrying heavy bags with the arm at risk.
- 2 Wear rubber gloves for housework and long sleeves and protective gloves when gardening.
- 3 Take care with knives, hotplates, ovens, hot water, animals etc. Do not sit with your arm exposed to an open fire or heater. Any injury to the arm should be carefully washed and disinfected, then seen by a doctor.
- 4 Never offer the arm at risk for injection, for taking blood samples or blood pressure, nor for acupuncture. Wear a thimble when sewing.
- 5 Avoid excessive sun on the arm and protect against insect bites and stings.
- 6 Never cut or push back cuticles. Use cream or oil to keep them soft and trim.
- 7 Use cream or an electric razor only, for removing hair from the armpit.
- 8 It is a good idea to obtain a course of antibiotics from your GP before travelling abroad, in case of need.

PRECAUTIONS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

- 1 Avoid injecting into the limb at risk, or affected by lymphoedema, if possible.
- 2 Blood samples should be taken from the other side, whenever possible.
- 3 Avoid taking blood pressure from the arm at risk. However brief the procedure, compression may cause permanent damage to the lymphatic vessels.
- 4 If, despite all precautions, lymphoedema does develop, it is most important that every care is taken to keep the skin clean, moist and supple, in order to avoid infection.

Further information is available from:

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