

**St Margaret's**  
Hospice Care

# Prophylactic Monitoring

What to expect and what you need to know

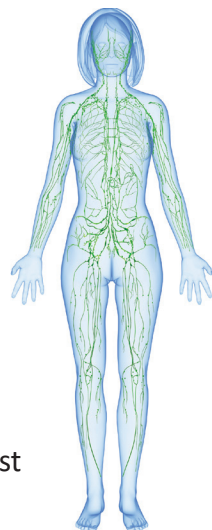


## Introduction

We do not know why some people go on to develop Lymphoedema and others do not. This leaflet provides advice on Lymphoedema and tips to reduce risk. It is important to live your life in the fullest way possible and sensible to do all you can to try and reduce risk, and not feel guilty that you have caused the swelling if it should develop.

## What is Lymphoedema?

Lymphoedema is an abnormal swelling in the tissues below the skin that occurs when the lymphatic fluid cannot drain away. Lymphoedema can occur anywhere in the body. It can happen if the lymphatic system is damaged or blocked due to surgery, cancer treatment or infection.



## Why we monitor you

The areas of your body that are potentially at risk of developing Lymphoedema are where lymph nodes have been removed or you have received radiotherapy treatment. It is known that whilst there is a life-long risk of developing Lymphoedema, the risk is greater within the first two years following cancer treatments. Our prophylactic monitoring service is held in St Margaret's Hospice in Taunton and enables us to monitor you over these first two years.

## What is a Sozo (L dex) measurement?

Sozo (Ldex) is a system that measures fluid levels within tissues and it can identify subtle changes in your "at risk" limb/limbs.

## What you can do

Keeping your skin hydrated and in good condition is important to maintain the natural barrier, keep it healthy and reduce the risk of skin infections.

## Tips for good skin care:

- Wash, dry and moisturise daily, paying particular attention to the areas between folds of skin, fingers, toes, armpits and groins
- Avoid creams and soaps that contain perfumes and additives
- Inspect the skin daily, treating any injuries appropriately
- Avoid sunburn and use a high SPF over vulnerable areas
- Avoid scratches from animals
- Use an insect repellent to reduce the risk of bites
- Use nail clippers rather than scissors
- Use an electric razor or hair removal creams for removing unwanted hair
- Use a thimble for sewing
- Avoid injections, blood tests, blood pressure monitoring and acupuncture where possible
- Avoid excessively hot baths and showers
- Try not to wear restrictive clothing e.g. underwired/tight bras or pants

## Cellulitis

This is a skin infection which requires antibiotics to treat. Symptoms include increased swelling, heat, and redness to the at-risk region, alongside a raised temperature and flu-like symptoms.

## How to identify swelling

### Symptoms of swelling developing may include:

- Rings, jewellery and/or clothing getting tighter
- Heaviness and/or achiness in the 'at risk' limb/area
- Changes to the skin

## Tips for positioning and movement

- Do not carry heavy bags
- Plan, prioritise and pace your daily activities
- Careful positioning of arm/leg with pillows/support
- Become a fidget - keep wriggling and moving your fingers and/or toes in your at-risk area

*cont.*

## Staying active

Keeping active and using your muscles encourages the lymph system to drain.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends adults complete 30 minutes of moderate exercise per day.

Walking, swimming, cycling, Tai Chi, Yoga and Pilates are good forms of exercise however if you have any issues regarding introducing activity into your daily routine, please speak to your Lymphoedema Specialist.

**St Margaret's Hospice Care Taunton Hospice,**  
Heron Drive, Bishops Hull, Taunton, TA1 5HA

 01823 333822

**St Margaret's Hospice Care Yeovil Hospice,**  
Little Tarrat Lane, Yeovil, BA20 2HU

 01935 709480

 [CRC@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk](mailto:CRC@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk)

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