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POSITION STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL LYMPHEDEMA NETWORK

*By NLN Medical Advisory Committee; Approved by the NLN Board of Directors: 07/01/2005;
Expires: 07/01/2007*

TOPIC: LYMPHEDEMA RISK REDUCTION PRACTICES

I. Skin Care - Avoid trauma/injury and reduce infection risk

- Keep extremity clean and dry.
- Apply moisturizer daily to prevent chapping/chaffing of skin.
- Attention to nail care; do not cut cuticles.
- Protect exposed skin with sunscreen and insect repellent.
- Use care with razors to avoid nicks and skin irritation.
- If possible, avoid punctures such as injections and blood draws.
- Wear gloves while doing activities that may cause skin injury (i.e., gardening, working with tools, using chemicals such as detergent).
- If scratches/punctures to skin occur, wash with soap and water, apply antibiotics, and observe for signs of infection (i.e. redness).
- If a rash, itching, redness, pain, increased skin temperature, fever or flu-like symptoms occur, contact your physician immediately.

II. Activity / Lifestyle

- Gradually build up the duration and intensity of any activity or exercise.
- Take frequent rest periods during activity to allow for limb recovery.
- Monitor the extremity during and after activity for any change in size, shape, tissue, texture, soreness, heaviness or firmness.
- Maintain optimal weight.

III. Avoid limb constriction

- If possible, avoid having blood pressure taken on the at risk arm.
- Wear loose fitting jewelry and clothing.

IV. Compression Garments

- Should be well-fitting.
- Support the at risk limb with a compression garment for strenuous activity (i.e. weight lifting, prolonged standing, running).
- Wear a well-fitting compression garment for air travel.

V. Extremes of Temperature

- Avoid exposure to extreme cold, which can be associated with rebound swelling, or chapping of skin.
- Avoid prolonged (> 15 minutes) exposure to heat, particularly hot tubs and saunas.
- Avoid immersing limb in water temperatures above 102° F.

VI. Additional practices specific to lower extremity lymphedema

- Avoid prolonged standing or sitting.
- When possible, avoid crossing legs.
- Wear proper, well-fitting footwear.

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