

GEISINGER HEALTHSOUTH REHABILITATION

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“...A Higher Level of Care”

FACT SHEET

LYMPHEDEMA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Geisinger HEALTHSOUTH Rehabilitation Hospital offers a comprehensive lymphedema management program. Lymphedema is a condition which causes abnormal swelling, usually of an arm or leg, and tends to worsen over time. While it is not curable, the size of the limb and complications may be greatly reduced by adequate treatment, which has long been available in Europe and for several years in the United States. The program is tailored to meet individual needs ranging from a one-time consult with home exercises to an intensive course of one month or more.

CANDIDATES FOR TREATMENT

Individuals admitted to the Lymphedema Management Program include those who have:

- **Primary Lymphedema (Congenital, Lymphedema Praecox or Tarda)**
- **Secondary Lymphedema usually related to:**
 - *Cancer Surgery (Breast, Pelvic, Melanoma...)
 - *Radiation Treatment
 - *Injury
 - *Chronic Venous Insufficiency
- Patients require medical clearance of contraindications and precautions such as infection, arterial insufficiency, active cancer and active DVT.
- This treatment is not appropriate for systemic edema related to such conditions as CHF and kidney disease.
- Patient motivation and compliance are key factors to success.

Relatively early treatment is best, but motivated individuals with lymphedema of many years' duration have been successful. Those who have had repeated infections, significant pain related to the edema, and interference with daily living tasks are often most motivated for an intensive program. Persons with mild edema may benefit from a simpler program with emphasis on preventing worse edema.

BENEFITS OF TREATMENT

- Decrease limb girth, soften tissue, and improve skin quality
- Prevent open wounds, decrease risk of infection and hospitalization
- Improve range of motion, exercise capacity and appearance
- Improve quality of life, reduce risk of immobility and social isolation
- Enable independence in daily living activities and long term self-management

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Skin & Wound: Care as needed.

Activities of Daily Living Instruction: Includes methods for donning and doffing garments with or without assistive devices.

Manual Drainage: A gentle hands-on technique, unlike traditional massage, designed to drain fluid away from edematous areas and back into circulation using alternate pathways.

Low Stretch Compression Bandaging: After manual drainage, multi-layer cotton bandaging is used daily while limb size is changing to prevent the return of fluid.

Therapeutic Exercise: Patients are instructed in safe exercise that encourages fluid drainage through muscle pumping action.

Compression Garments: Individually fitted garments help to maintain reduction in swelling once limb size has stabilized.

Hand and Upper Extremity Therapy: Our lymphedema therapist is also a certified hand therapist (CHT) and has completed courses on rehabilitation after breast cancer surgery.

Patient Education: Education in all of the above areas is provided to patients, families and/or caregivers to ensure competency in the long-term home management program.

A physician's order is required for treatment. Please include the diagnosis and “Occupational Therapy – Evaluate and Treat”. Since establishing our program in 1995 (the first in central Pennsylvania), **Darcy Decker, OTR/L**, has completed both certification and advanced courses in lymphedema treatment, including Leduc, Lerner/Klose/Norton, Miller and ACOLS (Zuther). In May 2001, the Lymphedema Association of North America offered the first national certification for Lymphedema therapists. **Mrs. Decker was 1 of 100 therapists nationwide and 7 in Pennsylvania to receive this certification (CLT-LANA).**

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