

# Lymphedema Therapy

Care for Your Quality of Life





# The right place for lymphedema therapy

If you've received a lymphedema diagnosis, count on Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital and Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital for a high level of care that can give you greater confidence and peace of mind. While not curable, lymphedema can be managed with early intervention and therapy so you can enjoy your daily activities without worry or discomfort.

Northwestern Medicine has licensed occupational and physical therapists, certified in lymphedema treatment. They can help you gain control of your symptoms and teach you the self-management techniques to achieve that goal.

# What is lymphedema?

Your lymphatic system has several purposes. One is to work with your immune system to remove unwanted substances such as bacteria from your body. Because the lymphatic system doesn't have a pump like your heart to help move fluid through the body, it relies on pressure, respiratory movement and muscle contraction. When that can't occur because of a trauma, injury or a blockage, fluids can build up causing swelling, pain and restriction in movement. This is lymphedema, a chronic condition that typically occurs in an arm or leg and can affect men and women.

Lymphedema occurs most often when lymph nodes are removed or treated in relation to breast, uterine, prostate or lymphoma cancer.



### **How is lymphedema treated?**

Treating your lymphedema keeps your lymph system functioning at its optimal level. When lymphedema is untreated, infections can occur, and in some cases, swelling and inflammation of the skin can lead to mobility and circulation problems.

There are many treatment options available. The most common involve manual lymph drainage, compression and exercise. Most treatment programs involve several techniques in order to provide extended relief and effectiveness.

Before beginning any treatment at a Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital or Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital outpatient facility, you will be evaluated by a licensed occupational or physical therapist certified in lymphedema management. Your therapist will review your physician's recommendations and work with you to develop a customized therapy program to meet your individual needs.

# Your course of care

## Getting started

The process begins with a physician's referral to Northwestern Medicine rehabilitation services to evaluate and treat your lymphedema by one of our licensed, certified occupational or physical therapist. You can bring the referral to your first appointment or have your physician's office fax it in advance. The duration of therapy varies according to individual needs; however, early intervention can shorten the length of time needed for you to see results.

## Designed to meet your needs

Northwestern Medicine provides rehabilitation expertise delivered with a personal touch. The benefits of a custom-tailored lymphedema program include:

Trusted care from licensed, occupational and physical therapists certified in lymphedema care

The ability to schedule one-on-one treatments with the same therapist throughout the course of your program, ensuring continuity of care and updates to your referring physician

The confidence of being supported by a hospital-based, full-service rehabilitation department

Convenient, complimentary valet parking

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### **What you can expect**

The goal of occupational or physical therapy is to minimize the frequency and severity of your lymphedema symptoms. You can expect to learn about and benefit from the procedures your therapist uses during your treatments. Possible treatment approaches can include but are not limited to:

Manual lymphatic drainage

Short stretch compression bandaging

Education in skin care

Compression garment fitting and training

Lymphedema prevention and precaution tips

Identification of high-risk activities

Remedial exercises

Establishing a home management program

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**To schedule an appointment for an evaluation or for more information, please call 630.933.6293. TTY for the hearing impaired 630.933.4833.**



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