

CANCER AWARE WORKBOOK



WELLNESS
FOR CANCER

The Wellness for Cancer Workbook was created in collaboration with specialists in the field of oncology, oncology massage, and manual lymph drainage.

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This workbook is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians.

The information in this workbook is intended to supplement, NOT REPLACE, proper massage and skin care training. Like any practice involving equipment, balance, and environmental factors, massage poses some inherent risks. The authors advise readers to take full responsibility for their safety, know, and understand their limits. Before practicing the skills described in this book, be sure that your equipment is well maintained and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training, and/or comfort level.

Cancer Aware Training Workbook
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COMPROMISED LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

What is the Lymphatic System

The lymphatic system acts as the body's cleaning, filtering, and removal system, providing a critical component to the proper function of the immune system. The lymphatic system:

- Carries metabolic waste, debris, and cells from the extremities through the filtering system of the body
- Removes excess swelling (edema) due to injury or surgery
- Lymph nodes filter debris before returning it to the circulatory system for elimination
- Lymph nodes make white blood cells—a critical component of fighting disease and malaise

The lymphatic system is comprised of lymph nodes, lymph vessels, the thoracic duct and other lymphatic tissues.

- The lymph vessels carry lymphatic fluid from the extremities and other areas of the body through the lymph nodes and return the fluid to the subclavian veins. These vessels have a one-way valve system that prevents lymphatic fluid from going back down the vessels. Lymph fluid only flows in one direction – up.
- Lymph nodes act as the filtering and cleaning system for lymphatic fluid. Lymph nodes are located throughout the body. However, there are five superficial lymphatic drainage pathways: the neck, the axilla (right and left, individually), and the inguinal (right and left, individually).
- The thoracic duct is located in the trunk. After lymph fluid is processed through the inguinal nodes, the thoracic duct returns the filtered fluid to the left subclavian vein back into the circulatory system.

Diseases of the Lymphatic System

The most common diseases of the lymphatic system include:

- Lymphadenopathy is an enlargement of the lymph nodes.
 - Lymphadenopathy is usually caused by an infection, inflammation or cancer. An infection can be localized like strep throat or an insect bite or can be systemic, such as HIV.
- Lymphedema is a condition where fluid backs up often due to removal and/or damage to lymph nodes.
- Lymphoma is cancer of the lymph nodes. Lymphocytes grow and multiply uncontrollably. Lymphocytes are a type of white blood cell that is part of the immune system. The two types of lymphocytes are B cells and T cells. B cells produce antibodies that attack invading bacteria, viruses, and toxins. T cells destroy the body's own cells. Lymphocytes are made in the lymph nodes but are found throughout the body.

What is Lymphedema

Lymphedema is the accumulation of protein-rich fluids in the interstitial space. It generally affects the extremities; however, lymphedema can occur in the head and neck, trunk, and other areas of the body.

There are two types of lymphedema:

- **Primary lymphedema** is a malfunction of the lymphatic system due to a hereditary condition.
- **Secondary lymphedema** is a disruption in the lymphatic system due to removal of or damage to lymph nodes in one of the superficial drainage pathways.

Understanding Lymphedema

When the lymphatic system is compromised, the lymph fluid cannot be removed from the body, creating excess fluid buildup, typically in the extremities.

Once the lymphatic system is compromised that individual becomes at risk for lymphedema. A person remains at risk for lymphedema for the remainder of their lives. Lymphedema does not develop in all of those that are at risk. However, if lymphedema does develop, it is a lifelong condition.

Lymphedema cannot be cured. The best treatment for lymphedema is complete decongestive therapy, which includes:

- Bandaging
- Manual lymph drainage
- Lifestyle education
- Meticulous skin care
- Exercise

With proper medical attention, those with lymphedema can maintain an excellent quality of life, participating in normal work and social activities.

Lymphedema and Cancer

Lymphedema develops in people with cancer due to lymph node trauma. This includes:

- Lymph node removal
- Lymph node biopsy, including needle biopsy
- Radiation to lymph nodes
- Any other damage to lymph nodes

Lymphedema is risk for those with breast cancer, head and neck cancers, gynecological cancers, colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, lymphoma, and melanoma. While these are the more common cancers connected with lymphedema, they are not the only cancers connected with lymphedema.

Understanding how infection can lead to lymphedema

When viruses or bacteria enter the body lymphocytes (white blood cells) are made in the lymph nodes to fight the infection. These lymphocytes travel to the infected site and attack. This causes a temporary inflammatory response. The lymph vessels then carry this excess fluid back through the lymph nodes for filtering and cleaning before returning to the circulatory system.

In the case of an individual at risk for lymphedema, the smallest cut or bite can lead to an inflammatory response. The trouble is that excess fluid cannot efficiently return through the lymphatic system to the circulatory system. This can cause a backup of fluid or lymphedema.

Lymphatics lie in the superficial (subcutaneous) skin layer. This is why meticulous skin care is so important.

- Do not push back cuticles
- Avoid harsh peels and skin care products that can enter through the skin into the subcutaneous layer
- Avoid using sharp objects in skin care

Signs and Symptoms of Lymphedema

Knowing the signs and symptoms of lymphedema will help differentiate those from other things that may be going on in the body. Signs and symptoms will ONLY develop in the affected watershed (see Watershed Mapping) where lymph nodes have been damaged and/or removed.

- Slow onset, progressive
- Pitting edema
- Starts distally (fingers/toes)
- Cellulitis is common
- Rarely painful
- Discomfort (heaviness/achiness)
- Skin feels tight
- Decreased flexibility in joints affected by edema
- Difficulty fitting into clothing
- Jewelry feels tight
- Skin changes (thickening)

Watershed Mapping

The body is divided into watersheds based on the superficial drainage pathways of lymph fluid: the neck, axilla and inguinal regions.

Lymph nodes in the neck drain the head and neck.

This watershed includes all areas above the collar bones. Cancers likely to affect lymph nodes in the neck include all head and neck cancers, skin cancer (melanoma), and lymphoma.

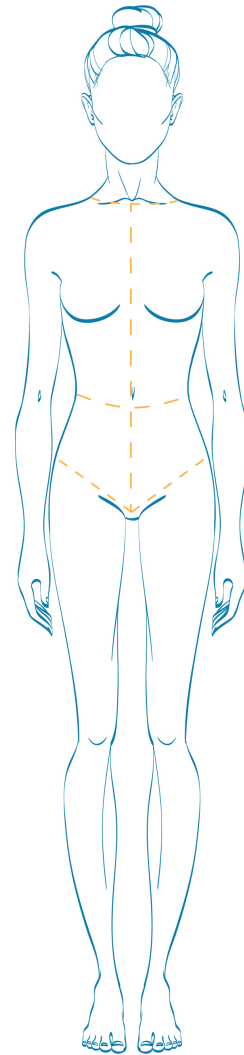
The axilla drainage pathways include the part of the body below the collar bones to above the navel. This is further divided into right and left watersheds, or regions. Cancers common to affect this area include skin cancer (melanoma), breast cancer, and lymphoma.

The back and abdominal area below the navel and the legs drain to the inguinal nodes and are also divided into right and left watersheds. Cancers common to affect this area include all gynecological cancers, colorectal (bowel) cancer, skin cancer (melanoma), and lymphoma.

- Lymphedema affects 15% to 80% of all cancer survivors
- Lymphedema can occur ANYTIME after surgery, including years later
- Those at risk for lymphedema remain at risk for the rest of their lives
- Lymphedema is a lifelong condition that cannot be cured

Label Superficial Drainage Pathways

- Mark the lymph node locations of the superficial drainage pathways
 - Neck
 - Axilla
 - Inguinal
- Draw arrows in the direction of flow of lymphatic fluid
- Draw the watershed boundaries

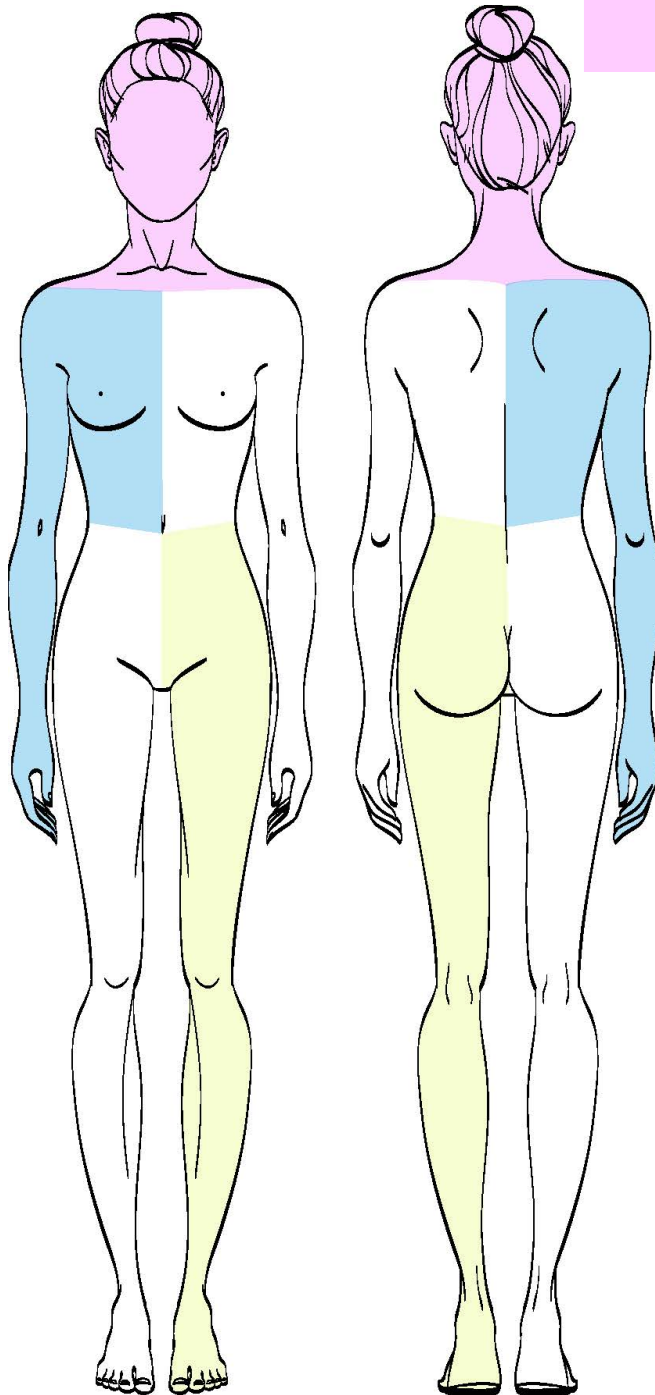


Head/Neck Affected Area

- Both
- Front, Back
- Sides of head and neck to midline and down to clavicle

Axilla Affected Area

- Left, Right, Both
- Front, Back
- From Clavicle to lowest rib
- Including the arms, hands, shoulders



Inguinal Affected Area

- Left, Right, Both
- Supine, Prone
- From lowest rib to extremity of leg and foot

The Three Parameters of Massage for a Client At-Risk of Lymphedema

Time

- Work the affected region(s) last
- Begin massage in the unaffected region(s)
- Always work in the region of healthy lymph nodes
- Spend less time massaging the affected area

Direction

- Always massage towards working nodes
- Always work from the tip of the toes and fingers upwards
- Do not drag your hands down the arm or leg of the affected side
- Finish massage strokes across the watershed boundary often
- Massage extremities beginning proximal, working to distal and finishing proximal or with one long finishing stroke towards working lymph nodes

Pressure

- Use medium pressure, level 2 touch
- Level 3 may be OK only after a year since the last medical treatment (surgery, radiation, and/or chemo) Massage in the superficial muscle layer
- Use Mindful Touch when edema is present
- Do not use massage strokes that redden the skin
- Do not stretch or manipulate affected limb
- Avoid joint movements for the first 90 days after surgery
- Do not hang the at-risk limb over the edge of the table for a long period of time

Deep tissue is NEVER appropriate for someone at risk of lymphedema in the affected region(s).

- Lymphedema can be triggered by a deep tissue massage
- Deep tissue can cause a histamine response, causing fluid to accumulate in the at-risk extremity
- Deep tissue increases permeability in the blood vessels
- Deep tissue increases capillary blood pressure