Understanding Lymphedema

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• My job in the next 15 minutes is to cover 3 hours worth of information.

• Wish me luck!
What is lymphedema

- Lymphedema is a build up of fluid in the body because the lymphatic system is compromised in some way.

- We need to understand fluid in the body
It’s all about the fluid

• Fluid leaves the heart one way
  – Arteries

• Fluid returns 2 ways
  – Veins
    – Lymphatic vessels
      • Lymph nodes

  – What goes wrong?
Grades of lymphedema

- 0- no sign of swelling
- 1- swelling resolves with limb elevation
- 2- does not resolve with limb elevation, tissue gets thick and “pits”
- 3- severe swelling with changes in skin
2 types of patients

• Those that have it…

• Those that don’t

Let’s talk!
Will I get lymphedema?

• We don’t know

• Reserve capacity

• Risk factors
  – Infection
  – Injury
  – Weight gain
Exercise

• Avoid the myths
  – “No pain. No gain”

  – “Feel the burn”
Exercise

• Slow and progressive

• 8-12 rule

• 10-15% rule
Early warning signs

• Knuckle
• Wrists
• Elbows
• Tendons
• Veins
• How does your ring and watch fit?
Complete decongestive therapy

- Manual lymph drainage
- Education
- Exercise (muscle pumping, diaphragmatic breathing)
- Skin care
  - An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure
- Compression
  - Early phase
  - Maintenance phase
Compression

- Short stretch bandaging
- Compression sleeves
  - Gloves and gauntlets
- Pumps
Compression

Short stretch bandaging

Compression garment

Glove

Night time compression

Gauntlet
Compression

Pumps
Not for everyone!
What to do if...

- Check with your doctor
  - Especially if it is a quick onset
  - Rule out medical possibilities then…
Thank You!