

Lymphedema Risk Assessment Tool

Answering the following questions with the help of your healthcare professional will provide an indication of your relative risk of developing secondary arm or leg lymphedema. If you have already been diagnosed with lymphedema, this assessment guide can also help determine the risk of it becoming worse. Once you have added up your score, you can determine whether you are

LOW, MODERATE, or HIGH RISK.

ARMS

EVENT/SITUATION	✓	Score
Whole of breast removed (mastectomy)		2
Part of breast removed		1
More than 10 nodes removed from armpit		3
More than 2 but less than 10 nodes removed from armpit		2
1 or 2 nodes removed from armpit		1
Radiotherapy to armpit area		3
Radiotherapy to chest/breast area		2
Fluids drained from wound more than 1 week		2
Infection at the wound site		2
More than 2 infections (redness) in the limb per year		3
One infection (redness) in the limb per year		2
Heaviness, tightness or tension in the limb at times		2
Limb feels different as the day progresses		1
Frequent cuts/scratches to the limb		2
Dry skin		2
OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH MAY ADD TO RISK		
OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH MAY ADD TO RISK	✓	Score
Frequent long distance air traveler		1
Previous or current other injuries to limb/shoulder		1
Surgery was on side of dominant hand		2
Generally experience high stress levels		2
Generally have high non-controlled blood pressure		2
Thyroid gland activity is not normal and not medicated		1
"At risk" limb is used for repetitive actions		1
Often carry heavy loads for long periods using "at risk" arm		1
Smoking is currently part of my life		1
Body weight is a little high (overweight)		2
Body weight is very high (obese)		3
Swelling was present in limb prior to surgery		1
Total Score		

LEGS

EVENT/SITUATION	✓	Score
More than 10 nodes removed from the groin		3
More than 2 but less than 10 nodes removed from groin		2
1 or 2 nodes removed from the groin		1
Radiotherapy to the groin/pelvic area		3
Fluids drained from wound more than 1 week		2
Infection at the wound site after surgery		2
Average of more than 2 infections (cellulitis) in the limb per year		3
Average of one infection (cellulitis) in the limb per year		2
Heaviness, tightness or tension in the limb at times		1
Limb feels worse as the day progresses		1
Frequent cuts/scratches to the limb		2
Dry or scaly skin on lower legs/feet		3
OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH MAY ADD TO RISK		
OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH MAY ADD TO RISK	✓	Score
Family history of leg swelling		2
Frequent long distance air/bus/car traveler		2
Previous or current other injuries to legs, ankles or feet		1
Limb is most often in a dependent position (standing)		3
Generally experience high stress levels		2
Generally have high blood pressure		2
Thyroid gland activity is not normal and not medicated		1
Diabetic but controlled by diet or medication		1
Diabetic uncontrolled		3
Some varicose veins or spider veins		1
Many varicose veins or spider veins		2
Prior varicose vein stripping and scars		2
Smoking is currently part of my life		1
Body weight is a little high (overweight)		2
Body weight is very high (obese)		4
Diet is rich in animal fats		2
Swelling was present in limb prior to surgery/radiotherapy		1
Total Score		

0-10 = Low Risk

11-20 = Moderate Risk

More than 20 = High Risk

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Editor's Note: This guide is designed as an educational aid based primarily on experience, not evidence in literature.

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