

Lymphedema/Chronic Edema

What Every Physician Should Know



A progressive, chronic inflammatory condition that can affect any area of the body, most commonly the limbs.

It is estimated that up to ONE MILLION CANADIANS suffer from this disease; yet most are undiagnosed and not treated.

Early diagnosis and adequate management are important.

1 CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS

PRIMARY

- Hereditary
- Congenital

SECONDARY

- Obesity, immobility
- Venous Disease
- Many cancers and their treatments (lymph node dissection, radiation)
- Surgical interventions
- Trauma, infection

2 COMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF INADEQUATE TREATMENT

- Recurrent bacterial cellulitis in the affected limb, risk of septicemia
- Skin and tissue changes, e.g., papillomata, thickened skin (pachydermia), dermatitis
- Chronic wounds, lymphorrhea, lymph cysts
- Reduced function, work disability
- Negative psychological/body image/social impact

3 ASSESSMENT AND INVESTIGATIONS

- Edema (pitting or non-pitting)
- Stemmer sign
- Rule out deep venous thrombosis, cancer, cardiac, renal, liver disease and hypoproteinemia
- Identify causes of co-existing pain

4 TREATMENT

Skin Care	Compression	Exercise and Weight Control	Manual Lymph Drainage	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- cleansing- moisturizing- avoiding trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- short-stretch bandage systems- compression garments and devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- decongestive exercise regime- regular physical activity- healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- MLD as required- self lymphatic massage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Education in self-management
Surgical treatments for lymphedema are being piloted and investigated in Canada.				
Referral to a certified lymphedema therapist or knowledgeable clinician for a therapeutic plan and support				

5 PHARMACOTHERAPY

- No current, effective drug treatments
- Diuretics usually not effective unless there is concurrent fluid overload (CHF)
- Antibiotics for cellulitis
- Antifungals as required

Lymphedema Resources

For more information on treating lymphedema and resources for your patients please contact:

NATIONAL

Visit www.canadalymph.ca for comprehensive information about lymphedema, assessment, and educational tools for health professionals and to subscribe to **Pathways**, the CLF's quarterly lymphedema magazine.

INTERNATIONAL

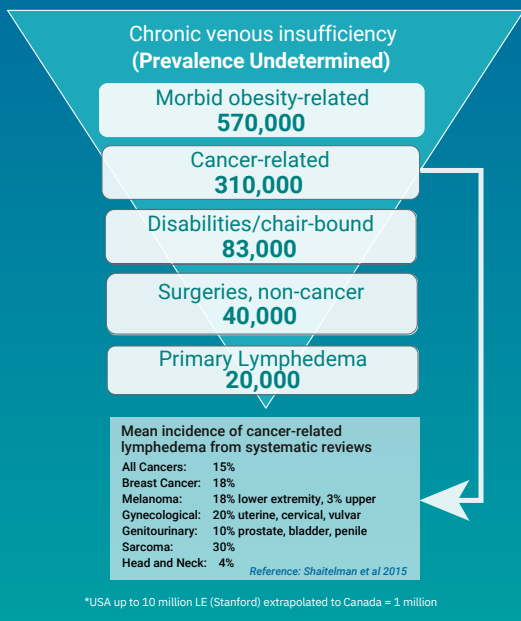
Visit the International Lymphoedema Framework website (www.lympho.org) to access International Best Practice Guidelines, Focus and Position Documents on topics such as Lymphedema for Palliative Care, Compression Therapy, Surgical Interventions, Care of Children etc.



Prevalence in Canada

1 million* for 36 million population

Canadian Lymphedema Framework 2022



CANADIAN PROVINCIAL PARTNERS

Contact your provincial lymphedema association for information on local resources including certified lymphedema therapists, compression garment fitters and patient support groups.

Alberta: www.albertalymphedema.com
Atlantic Region: www.atlanticlymph.ca
British Columbia: www.bclymph.org
Manitoba: www.lymphmanitoba.ca
New Brunswick: www.lymphedemanb.ca
Newfoundland and Labrador: www.lymphnl.com
Nova Scotia: www.lymphedemanovascotia.com
Ontario: www.lymphontario.ca
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