

## Signs and Symptoms of Lymphedema

Lymphedema can develop in any part of the body.

When Lymphedema begins to develop, the signs to watch out for are:

1. Prickly, burning, or itchy sensations in the area.
2. A heavy or achy feeling; skin feeling tight and full
3. A ring, watch, or bracelet tightness at wrist
4. Clothes not fitting in a certain area
5. Increased swelling in an area that sometimes recedes at night but returns, as the body is vertical for a long period of time.
6. Persistent swelling
7. Decreased flexibility, especially in the knee, elbow, ankle, or wrist

Stages of Lymphedema:

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| Latent:  | No apparent symptoms  |
| Stage 1: | (MILD), “pitting” edema, when tissue is pressed there is a finger impression in the skin that stays. Usually in the morning upon rising the affected area is about normal size and the edema has receded. |
| Stage 2: | (MODERATE), “non-pitting” edema, tissue is spongy; the tissue bounces back when pressed without indentation.  |
| Stage 3: | (SEVERE), swelling is irreversible and the limb or area becomes very large. The tissue is hard (fibrotic).  |

If lymphedema is left untreated, the limb or area will continue to swell with areas of stagnated lymph that isn't moving. This stagnation leads to fibrosis (an accumulation of stagnated lymph that doesn't move and becomes hardened). Because this fluid is protein-rich, it is a perfect medium for growth of bacteria. Furthermore, severe swelling and fibrosis leads to loss of mobility, other chronic infections and sometimes irreversible complications.

Any break in the skin can open the way for bacteria to enter. It is very important to maintain good healthy skin by: keeping it clean, soft and supple, and safeguarding against any cuts, bites, etc.