

Lymphedema Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS LYMPHEDEMA?

The lymphatic system is a network of tissues, vessels and organs that work together to move a colorless, watery fluid called lymph back into your circulatory system (your bloodstream). If any areas of the lymphatic system are removed, damaged or not working properly, the lymph fluid cannot be returned to the blood stream in a normal way. This leads to problems with swelling, cellulitis, pain, and difficulty moving the body.

WHY DO I NEED LYMPHEDEMA THERAPY AND HOW WILL IT HELP?

- Reduce limb volume and swelling
- Improve mobility and range of motion
- Prevent complications such as cellulitis and wounds
- Enhance quality of life
- Promote patient independence through self-management

WHY DO I HAVE LYMPHEDEMA?

There are numerous causes of lymphedema. Some examples are post-orthopedic surgery, edema following injury or trauma, cancer treatments (surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy), chronic venous insufficiency, infection, obesity, and chronic inflammation.

DO I NEED A LYMPHEDEMA DIAGNOSIS TO RECEIVE LYMPHEDEMA THERAPY?

No, Lymphedema Therapy can help patients with persistent swelling after orthopedic surgery, traumatic injuries, or those with a history of cancer who develop new swelling after an injury or surgery.

DO I NEED A REFERRAL TO SEE A TCO LYMPHEDEMA THERAPIST?

The states of Minnesota and Wisconsin do not require a referral however your insurance may require a referral to utilize your benefits. Please verify with your insurance carrier prior to making an appointment.

WHAT IF I HAVE A WOUND IN THE SWOLLEN AREA?

We unfortunately do not treat most wounds. If you have a wound, please contact your doctor to help you find a wound or vascular specialist.

WHAT DOES THE FIRST VISIT ENTAIL?

We start with a detailed medical history to understand your specific needs, followed by a physical assessment where we take baseline measurements to monitor your results. You will receive targeted education on lymphedema care, and—if time permits after the assessment—your therapist will begin your first treatment session so you can start finding relief right away.

HOW MANY VISITS ARE NEEDED?

The number of visits depends on how the body responds to the therapy. We usually start with 1x a week for 4-6 weeks unless the therapist determines differently. Visits are usually 45 minutes long which may vary depending on the scheduled locations or treating therapists.

WHAT IF THERE ISN'T APPOINTMENT AVAILABILITY FOR SEVERAL WEEKS?

We offer several locations for lymphedema therapy that we can look at until an appointment at your preferred location becomes available. Additionally, we have a cancellation list that our scheduling team and therapists actively monitor to see if we can get you in sooner.

CAN I USE ANY GARMENTS FOR LYMPHEDEMA I FIND ONLINE?

Not all compression garments are created equal. While many are available online, they vary significantly in pressure levels (mmHg) and material quality. We strongly recommend an initial evaluation before purchasing. Your therapist will determine the specific compression strength and style required for your condition to ensure the garment is both safe and effective for your long-term management.

HOW DO I GET A PUMP TO USE AT HOME?

To ensure a home pump is the right fit for your treatment, the process begins with a clinical evaluation. If a pump is recommended, we will coordinate with your physician for a referral. Our team then works with specialized vendors who will verify your insurance coverage, perform a professional fitting, and provide comprehensive training on how to use the device.