What is EDEMA?

Edema is swelling caused by collection of fluid in the spaces surrounding the body’s tissues. Some of the most common sites of swelling include the lower legs and hands (peripheral edema) and in the abdomen. It usually presents as puffiness and stretching of the skin, with gravity often causing the fluid to accumulate in the areas closest to the ground. This often occurs in the lower legs (pedal edema) after being up and about, standing or sitting for long periods of time and is more prominent at the end of the day. It can also accumulate in the lower back (sacral edema) after sitting or being in bed for a long period of time. It can occur in the arms and hands, often as a result of surgery, injury, or catheter placement in various parts of the upper body. This may be present after breast surgery, lymph gland surgery, or pacemaker or catheter placement in the large vessels in the upper body.

What are the signs and symptoms of EDEMA?

The skin often is stretched, tight and shiny. Pitting edema can be identified by pushing a finger in the area for a few seconds. If the finger is removed and an indentation is left for a few seconds, the edema is identified as "pitting" edema. If the edema does not "indent," this may be an indication of lymphedema.

Mild to moderate swelling in the lower legs can be a normal occurrence of aging and may not require treatment. Always discuss your concerns with your physician and call your doctor or seek medical treatment if your swollen leg/foot is red or warm to the touch and painful.

PHYSICIAN REFERRALS FOR EDEMA TREATMENT MAY BE MADE TO:

THE CENTER FOR COMPLETE WOUND CARE

The Center offers a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, state-of-the-art approach to managing patients with simple to complex wounds of various pathologies and/or disease states.

Physician referrals, please call: 708.229.6060

LYMPHEDEMA PROGRAM

LCMH offers advanced lymphedema services for patients with painful swelling and limited range of motion in the arms, fingers, legs or toes. We treat primary lymphedema caused by the absence of certain vessels at birth or abnormalities in the lymphatic system, or secondary lymphedema caused from blockage or interruption of the lymphatic system that can occur from cancer treatments such as surgery or radiation. Therapy may include lymphatic drainage, skin care, compression bandaging of affected areas, and exercises to promote lymphatic flow.

Physician referrals, please call: 708.229.5525

HEART FAILURE CLINIC

People with heart failure need extra time, medical attention and education to help keep them healthy and out of the hospital. Our team of experts, including nurses with specialties in heart failure, diabetes and wound care, pharmacists, dietitians, and others work collaboratively with the patient’s primary care doctors and specialists to provide comprehensive disease-specific education and personalized treatment for the patient and family.

Physician referrals, please call: 708.229.4278
Do you have abnormal swelling (Edema) in your arms or legs? WE CAN HELP.

**WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF EDEMA?**
A number of causes of different problems can cause edema, some more serious than others. Possible causes include:

- Chronic venous disease of the lower extremities, varicose veins, venous insufficiency
- Blood clots in the veins of the extremity
- Side effects from various medications
- Kidney diseases, thyroid disease or liver disease
- Low protein or albumin levels in the body from various causes
- Congestive Heart Failure
- Lymphedema, mastectomy and radiation therapy

**HOW IS EDEMA TREATED?**
There are some common treatments available, but you should work with your physician to identify any of the problems that may be causing the swelling, so those problems can be treated as well. Local treatment measures include:

- Diet with salt and fluid restriction
- Leg elevation when resting
- Massage therapy
- Diuretics of various strengths:

  - Compression stockings of various support levels. The skin should be lubricated with a light lotion to prevent friction and irritation. If there are open sores or wounds in the area that are to be covered, you may need additional treatment from a wound specialist.

**SUPPORT OPTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORT LEVEL</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>HEIGHT</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light Support</td>
<td>Fashion Hosiery, Jobst, Sigvaris, Medi Grip Wrap, Tubi Grip Wrap, Redi Grip Wrap</td>
<td>Open Toe, Closed Toe</td>
<td>Knee High, Thigh High</td>
<td>Edema prevention for persons engaged in activities/work that require standing/sitting without much activity; examples: beautician, cashier, factory worker, and some nursing positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measured, Ready-to-Wear Compression Stockings</td>
<td>(15-20 mmHg)</td>
<td>Open Toe, Closed Toe</td>
<td>Knee High, Thigh High</td>
<td>Nonambulatory clients with edema failing 16-18 mmHg stockings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20-30 mmHg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Devices are available at higher levels of compression, however, it is recommended that those patients be evaluated by Wound Care.

If you have ulcerations in the swollen limb, your doctor may refer you to our Center for Complete Wound Care. If you have Lymphedema or Heart Failure, your doctor may refer you to our Lymphedema Program or our Heart Failure Clinic. Please see reverse side for more about physician referrals for these Little Company of Mary services.