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Lymphedema Prevention

- Do not ignore any slight increase in swelling in the arm, hand, fingers, leg or chest. If any should occur, consult your doctor.
- Never allow an injection or a blood drawing in the affected limb. Have blood pressure checked in an unaffected limb.
- Keep the "at-risk" limb spotlessly clean. Use lotion (Eucerin, Nivea) after bathing. When drying, be gentle but thorough. Avoid vigorous, repetitive movements against resistance with the affected limb (scrubbing, pushing, pulling)
- Avoid heavy lifting with the affected arm. Never carry heavy handbags or bags with over-the-shoulder straps.
- Do not wear tight jewelry or elastic bands around affected limbs.
- Avoid extreme temperature changes when bathing, washing dishes, or sun bathing (no sauna or hot tub).
- Avoid any type of trauma (bruising, cuts, sunburn or other burns, sports injuries, insect bites, cat scratches).
- Wear gloves while doing housework, gardening and avoid cutting your cuticles (inform your manicurist).
- Exercise moderately. Do not lift more than 15 pounds. Recommended exercises: walking, swimming, light aerobics, bike riding, and special designed ballet or yoga.
- When traveling by air wear a compression garment or bandages.
- Use a well-maintained electric razor to remove hair.
- Warning: If you notice a rash, blistering, redness, increase of temperature or fever, see your physician immediately. An inflammation or infection in the affected arm could be the beginning or a worsening of lymphedema.
- Maintain your ideal weight with a well-balanced, low-sodium, high-fiber diet. Avoid smoking and alcoholic beverages. Lymphedema is a high protein edema, but eating too little protein will not reduce the protein element in the lymph fluid – rather this will weaken the connective tissue and worsen the condition. The diet should contain protein that is easily digested, such as chicken, fish or tofu.

If swelling should occur contact a doctor specializing in this area. Call 453-1930 in Austin for a list of references.