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Lymphedema Basics

Summary

Lymphedema is the name of a type of swelling. It happens when lymph builds up in your body's soft tissues. Lymph is a fluid that contains white blood cells that defend against germs. It can build up when the [lymph system](#) is damaged or blocked. It usually happens in the arms or legs.

Causes of lymphedema include

- Infection
- Cancer
- Scar tissue from radiation therapy or surgical removal of lymph nodes
- Inherited conditions in which lymph nodes or vessels are absent or abnormal

Treatment can help control symptoms. It includes exercise, compression devices, skin care, and massage.

Start Here

- [Guide to Understanding Lymphedema](#) (Living Beyond Breast Cancer) - PDF
- [Lymphedema](#) (Lymphatic Education & Research Network)
- [Lymphedema](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Lymphedema \(PDQ\)-Patient Version](#) (National Cancer Institute) Also in [Spanish](#)

Treatment and Therapies

- [Treatment of Lymphedema](#) (National Cancer Institute) Also in [Spanish](#)

Living With Lymphedema

- [For People With Lymphedema](#) (American Cancer Society) Also in [Spanish](#)

- [Lymphedema Self-Care](#) (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in [Spanish](#)

Article Source

National Cancer Institute

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<https://medlineplus.gov>

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