



**Programme du lymphœdème
Lymphedema Program**

LYMPHEDEMA AND THE RISK OF INFECTION

All patients with lymphedema have an increased chance of infection (cellulitis) in the affected body part. This is because of the reduced immunity in the swollen limb. Although infection is an infrequent occurrence, it is important that all those with lymphedema know the signs of infection and obtain immediate medical advice if it occurs.

Many infections come from cuts, scrapes or other injury to the limb. Prevention advice as outlined in the AQL/LAQ brochure www.infolymphe.ca should be followed. If, in spite of these precautions, you develop the following signs and symptoms, please consult a doctor as soon as possible for an evaluation and to obtain antibiotics:

1. Sudden onset of rash with distant red margins, discoloration and itching in affected limb
2. Increased swelling
3. Fever or chills
4. Pain that may radiate into the axilla or groin

In addition to taking antibiotics, you should put off any manual lymph drainage, and start again when the doctor advises you to do so. Bandaging, compression sleeves or stockings can be continued if it is comfortable for you (since the limb may be painful for a few days). Some patients may require intravenous antibiotics in hospital if the antibiotics by mouth do not control the symptoms rapidly, or if the symptoms are severe.

In addition to the prevention advice discussed in the AQL/LAQ leaflet, proper care in the maintenance phase of lymphedema will minimize the risk of infection. Wear your compression device (e.g. garment, Velcro device, night garment, bandages), do your exercises and follow the advice of your therapist. If the swelling increases, get advice from your physician, your therapist or the lymphedema clinic about how to manage your program so as to regain control over your condition.

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