



**DR. SRIDEVI NANAVATI
BREAST CARE**

**"The Breast care you
deserve"**

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LYMPHEDEMA

WHAT IS LYMPHEDEMA?

- Lymphatic vessels are similar to arteries and veins that carry the lymphatic fluid away from tissues. This lymphatic fluid contains cells that help strengthen your immune system. The clear fluid is drained by the nodes.
- When these nodes are removed during axillary surgery, the clear fluid accumulates in the arm/hand that results in a swelling of the arm – which is called lymphedema. It can vary from simple hand swelling to the whole arm swelling up.

WHEN CAN LYMPHEDEMA DEVELOP?

For patients who undergo a sentinel node biopsy, the chance of developing lymphedema is very low, around 5%. However, for those who undergo axillary lymph node clearance, the risk increases to about 30%. Additionally, many patients may develop lymphedema within the first year after radiation treatment.

HOW CAN YOU PICK UP EARLY SIGNS OF LYMPHEDEMA?

YOUR CLOTHING SLEEVES OR JEWELRY MAY FEEL TIGHT.

YOUR ARM MAY FEEL HEAVY.

THERE MAY BE VISIBLE SWELLING IN YOUR ARM AND HAND

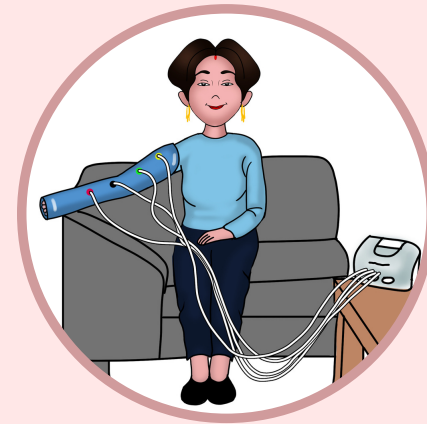
IS THERE A WAY TO TREAT IT?

Yes, lymphedema can be treated with intensive physiotherapy, which includes:

► **COMPRESSION BANDAGING:**
Wrapping the arm to reduce swelling.

► **MANUAL LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE OR LYMPHAPRESS:**
Special massages or devices to help move fluid.

► **JOINT MOBILITY EXERCISES:**
Exercises to keep your arm and joints moving well.



IS THERE A WAY TO PREVENT LYMPHEDEMA?

- While there are ways to reduce the risk of developing lymphedema, there isn't enough evidence to completely prevent it
- Gradually return to your normal activities after surgery.
- Do shoulder mobility exercises three times a day, every day, after surgery to help reduce the risk.
- Maintain your optimal weight to lower the chances of developing lymphedema.

For more tips, see the information sheet titled “Axillary Lymph Node Surgery.”