

## Treatment of Lymphedema

Currently, the *most effective and least invasive* treatment is Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT), which can be performed by a Certified Lymphedema Therapist. The length of treatment is dependent upon the severity and duration of the lymphedema. Ideally, treatment should begin as soon as possible when lymphedema is diagnosed and early screening is recommended for individuals that have had a known lymphatic system insult.



### Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) consists of:

**Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD)**—A gentle manual stimulation of intact lymphatic vessels to assist in removing fluid.

**Bandaging & compression**—Application of low stretch bandages and a compression garment

**Skin hygiene**—Education in skin and nail care

**Therapeutic Exercise**—Repetitive movement of joints to allow muscles to assist in pumping excess fluid away from affected area and back toward the heart.

**Self-Care Education**—A daily home program will be recommended by your therapist to maintain progress made during therapy treatment.



Ali Meyer, PT, DPT, CLT graduated from University of Nebraska Medical Center in 2017 with a Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT). She began working at Saunders Medical Center in May 2017 and recently became a Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) through the Academy of Lymphatic Studies (ACOLS)—one of

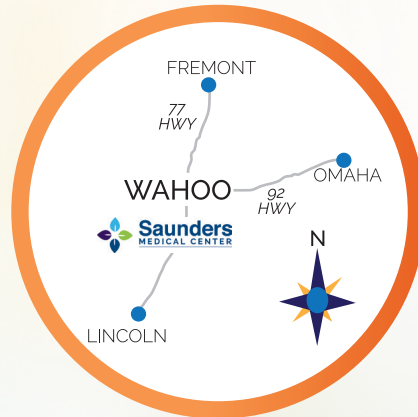
the leading schools in the U.S. for lymphedema management. Ali is excited to begin a Lymphedema Therapy program here at SMC to bring a new level of specialized care to a community with one of the highest prevalence of breast cancer cases in the state of Nebraska.



READY TO SCHEDULE? HAVE QUESTIONS? CALL TODAY—

**402 443-1426**

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## Lymphedema *therapy*



because  
*feeling well*  
is also a  
*must.*

HELPING YOU TO LIVE BETTER



## What is Lymphedema?

Lymphedema is abnormal swelling in tissues caused by a breakdown in the lymphatic system, due to a malfunctioning of the system or removal/damage of lymph nodes or vessels.

Lymphedema is a chronic, progressive disease that will worsen over time if left untreated, requiring lifelong treatment. It cannot be cured, however **can typically be controlled** with proper management and compliance with lifestyle changes.

## Symptoms & Complications

Inform your primary care provider if you notice or begin to experience any of the following signs:

- ◆ Swelling of limb or body parts—most commonly on one side of the body
- ◆ Heaviness, aching, tightness of limb or body parts
- ◆ Limited movement
- ◆ Difficulty fitting into normal clothing, footwear, or jewelry
- ◆ “Pitting” of skin—indentation remains after pressing into swollen skin tissue
- ◆ Hardening or thickening of skin
- ◆ Frequent skin infections (cellulitis or fungal) and open wounds



## Lymphedema vs. Normal Swelling (“Edema”)

Lymphedema typically effects one limb only, and if both limbs are swollen, then one side is more involved than the other. Edema is caused by increased water accumulation in tissues, whereas lymphedema is accumulation of protein-rich fluids in tissues. Please consult with your doctor and utilize diagnostic measures to ensure accurate diagnosis.

### CAUSES OF LYMPHEDEMA

Genetic malformation of the lymph system appearing at birth, puberty, or later in life is one cause.

The majority of people experience locked or damaged lymph vessels and/or nodes as a result of:

- ◆ Surgery—especially for cancer involving removal of nearby lymph nodes, however may also be caused by non-cancer related surgeries i.e. Total Knee Arthroplasty
- ◆ Frequent infections
- ◆ Chronic venous insufficiency
- ◆ Radiation
- ◆ Trauma
- ◆ Obesity
- ◆ Paralysis



## Lymphedema & Breast Cancer

Of the estimated 2-3 million cases of secondary lymphedema in the United States, the majority of these cases are caused by complications of breast cancer.

**1 in 8 women will develop breast cancer** during the course of their lives, and of those that seek cancer treatment (lumpectomy, mastectomy, radiation, etc), **42% will develop some degree of lymphedema at 1-year post-operation and 50-75% will develop lymphedema by 5 years post-operation.**



Be Well.