

## Early Detection of Lymphedema

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Your lymphatic (lymph) system is an important part of your body's immune system. Your lymphatic system is made up of lymph vessels, lymph nodes and lymphatic tissue. If any part of the lymphatic system is damaged, or missing, lymphatic fluid can start to collect in tissues and cause swelling. Lymphedema is a buildup of clear lymphatic fluid under your skin which causes swelling. The location and amount of swelling is different for each person. Swelling is most often seen in the arms and legs, but can also be found in the breast, head, neck or genitals.

Lymphedema can happen to both men and women. It is a lifelong condition that does not have a known cure at this time. Symptoms of lymphedema are different for each person. Symptoms most often show up within the first 2 to 3 years after treatment, but your risk is lifelong. If lymphedema is detected early, it can be easier to manage and may be reversed with treatment.

### How to detect early lymphedema

Members of your health care team will take measurements before and after your surgery to look for early signs of lymphedema and/or check your progress during lymphedema treatment. The **SOZO system** can be used to look at the amount of fluid and tissue in your body. This system may detect a buildup of fluid before you have any symptoms.

To take your measurements, you will stand on the SOZO system and place your hands and feet on the machine. The SOZO system sends painless, low-level electrical currents through your body. These currents travel through the fluid around the cells of your muscles and tissues in your arms and legs.

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

The system measures how well the electrical currents traveled through both your at-risk limb (the side you had surgery on) and your opposite limb. This measurement is called your **Lymphedema Index (L-Dex) score**. A L-Dex score that is out of your normal range, or has changed more than 6.5 units, may indicate early signs of lymphedema. A member of your health care team will talk with you about your L-Dex scores.

## Monitoring your L-Dex score

To check your progress, a member of your health care team will use the SOZO system to measure your L-Dex score before and at different times after your surgery. Use the chart below to track your progress.

Time	Date	L-Dex Score
Before surgery		
3 months after surgery		
6 months after surgery		
9 months after surgery		
12 months after surgery		
18 months after surgery		
24 months after surgery		

For more information about lymphedema, ask for the patient education handout, **Lymphedema and Treatment Options**.