

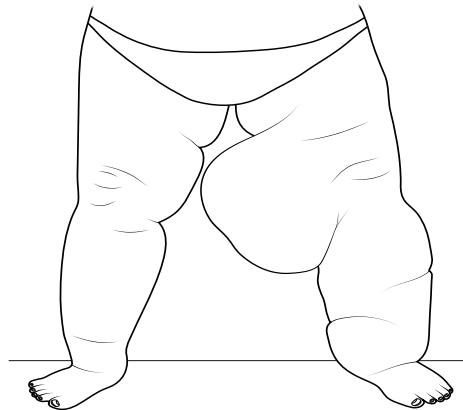
## Obesity-Induced Lymphedema

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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. It is most often seen in one, or both of your arms or legs. This swelling can also be found in the breast, head, neck or genitals.

Obesity-Induced Lymphedema is swelling of the legs, arms, stomach, and/or genitals that is caused by being overweight. It is unknown how obesity causes lymphedema. Studies show that a BMI above 60 can cause lymphedema of the legs. These same studies also show that once a BMI is above 80, lymphedema can develop in the arms.

Obesity-induced lymphedema may also cause an area of the body to “bulge”. This is called a **Massive-Localized Lymphedema (MLL)**. This bulge usually develops on the inside of one or both thighs. This large lobule can be very heavy and may reduce your ability to walk or wear clothing. The lobule can also become infected.



There is no cure for lymphedema. The main types of treatment for lymphedema are called “conservative”. Conservative treatments are provided by a Physical Therapist (PT) or Occupational Therapist (OT).

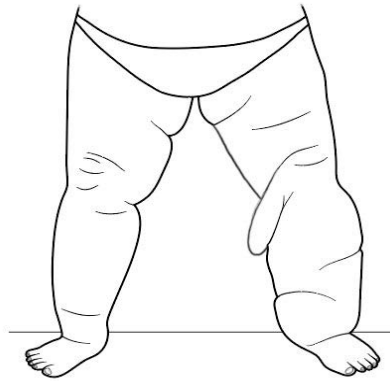
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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

Types of conservative treatments include:

- self-drainage massage
- compression bandages or wraps
- compression garments
- compression pumps
- exercises
- skin hygiene

When lymphedema is caused by obesity, weight loss through a Comprehensive Weight Management Clinic may also be part of the treatment plan. It may take months or years to lose the right amount of weight, to reduce your lymphedema and the size of the affected area. After conservative treatments, surgery on the area with lymphedema may be an option.



Surgery for obesity-induced lymphedema will normally only be done, after the swollen area has shrunk in size with conservative treatments, such as constant compression and weight loss. When the area has shrunk in size, the tissue will look similar to a deflated balloon and become loose and saggy. This change in size makes it easier and safer for the surgeon to remove the excess skin or soft tissue. This surgery will include an incision in the area where the excess skin and soft tissue are removed. The incision will be closed with stitches or staples and a wound vac, which is a dressing that uses a vacuum seal to help protect the wound and prevent infection, may be placed over top. After surgery, you may need to recover in a nursing home or schedule home health care visits to help with your daily living activities.

If you lost the amount of weight needed and had surgery to remove the excess tissue, that does not mean your lymphedema was cured. The swelling and excess tissue can return, if your weight increases again. Long-term management of lymphedema will require you to keep a healthy body weight.

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