

Your Lymphedema Consult

What to expect at your visit

This handout explains what to expect when you meet with your surgeon to talk about lymphedema or LYMPHA surgery.

What is lymphedema?

The *lymphatic system* is a network of tissues and organs that help remove toxins and waste from your body. It collects excess fluid from tissues and deposits them in the bloodstream.

Lymphedema is tissue swelling that occurs when lymph fluid cannot drain back into your blood. It is one of the problems that can occur after *lymph node dissection*. This is a type of cancer surgery that removes some of your lymph nodes.

How will a lymphedema consult help me?

This consult will be helpful if you:

- Are having a lymph node dissection surgery and want to lower your risk of having lymphedema
- Want to talk about surgery to treat your lymphedema



Talk with your surgeon if you have any questions about treatments for lymphedema.

What will happen at my consult visit?

During your visit:

- We will first measure your limbs to see if you have any swelling.
- We will use our SOZO device to take an “L-Dex” reading (see page 2).
- Your surgeon will talk with you about your treatment options.
- If you are having a lymph node dissection, you will find out if LYMPHA surgery is a good option for you. (See the handout “LYMPHA Surgery to Prevent Lymphedema.”)

How will you measure my limbs?

First, a medical assistant will bring you into an exam room. We will measure either your legs or your arms, depending on where you have swelling. To do this:

- We will make marks on your limb at 4 cm intervals.
- We will then measure the *circumference* (the distance around) of your limb at each mark.
- Another staff member will record these numbers.
- We will give the numbers to the surgeon and scan them into your medical record.

If you want a copy of these numbers, please ask the medical assistant during this visit.

What is a SOZO?

A SOZO is a device that measures your tissue fluids. It tells us whether you have lymphedema. Using the SOZO is quick, easy, and non-invasive.

The SOZO looks like the scale that you stand on in a doctor's office to take your weight. You will stand on the SOZO device in your bare feet. You will place your hands on metal plates. This device gives us your *L-Dex score*, which tells us how much extra fluid is in your limb.

How do I prepare for this consult?

Before your consult:

- Tell our staff if you have a pacemaker or other implanted electronic device, or if there is any chance you could be pregnant.

On the day of your consult:

- Remove all large jewelry such necklaces, bracelets, and watches. It is OK to wear earrings and piercings, if you have them.
- Remove any coins, phones, or other metal objects from your pockets.
- Bring any special equipment you use to take off or put on your compression garments. Before we measure you for lymphedema, we will ask you to remove any of these garments you may be wearing.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217, and press 2.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the resident on call for your surgeon.