

**STRONG SURVIVOR - LYMPHOEDEMA
MANAGEMENT & CANCER REHABILITATION**

LYMPHOEDEMA THERAPY & CARE EXPLAINED

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1. WHAT IS THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

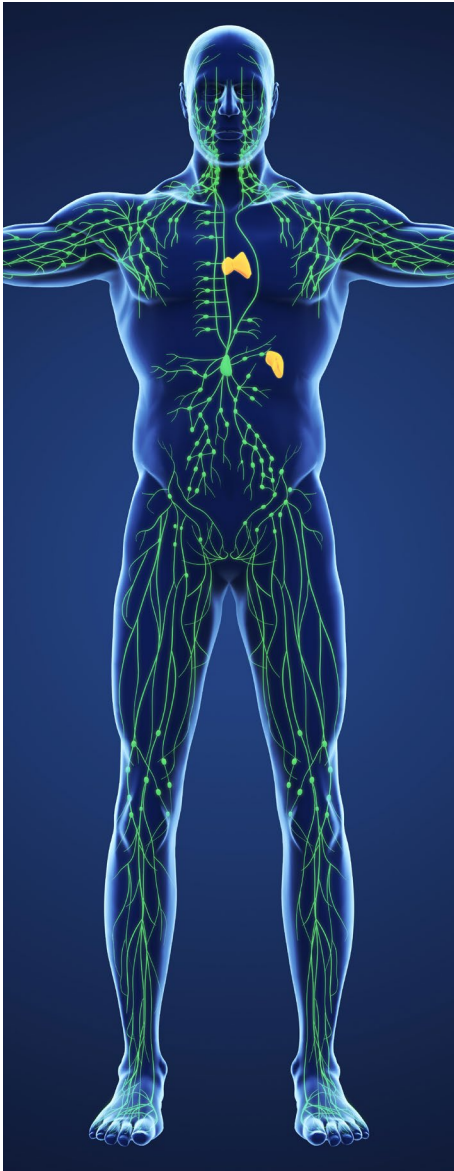
The lymphatic system is a vast network of vessels and nodes spread throughout the body. It's function is to collect, filter and transport the fluid that forms in our bodies during the process of oxygen and nutrient delivery by the vessels.



This fluid, which ends up in the lymphatic vessels, is known as lymphatic fluid.

The lymphatic fluid begins its journey in tiny lymphatic vessels, which are like tributaries of a river. These gradually meet and merge into larger and larger vessels, ultimately forming two ducts, which empty into veins on either side of the neck. Along the way, the fluid passes through the numerous lymph nodes which form part of the lymphatic system. The lymph nodes filter out viruses, bacteria and damaged or cancerous cells. This plays a vital role in our immune defence system.⁽³⁾

2. WHAT IS LYMPHOEDEMA ¹



- Lymphoedema is a condition where excessive protein rich fluid accumulates in body tissue and results in swelling of one or more regions of the body.
- This usually affects the limbs- however, it can also involve the trunk, breast, head and neck or genital area.
- Lymphoedema occurs when the lymphatic system is impaired and the demand for lymphatic drainage exceeds the capacity of the lymphatic system to efficiently remove or drain the “build-up” of fluid.

Lymphoedema can be classified as:

- 1. Primary:** Due to a genetic malformation of the lymphatics
- 2. Secondary:** Due to damage of lymph nodes or lymphatic vessels. This can occur with surgery , radiotherapy related to cancer treatment, recurrent cellulitis or following injury or trauma.
- 3. Mixed :** Due to an increased load on the lymphatic system, which can occur with certain venous issues, obesity, immobility and some medical conditions.

3. HOW IS LYMPHOEDEMA DIAGNOSED

- An Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner is specifically trained in this process, which is based on a clinical history and physical assessment.
- It is important to exclude any conditions which may mimic lymphoedema and your Lymphoedema Practitioner is trained to identify this and will communicate with your GP and specialist.
- Diagnosis of lymphoedema on a limb is based on clinical history of lymphoedema development, past medical history and physical examination involving limb size measurement, changes in the skin and changes in subcutaneous tissue.
- The severity of lymphoedema is assessed by considering:
 - Amount of swelling
 - Response to elevation
 - Rate of increase in size
 - Tissue texture changes
 - Skin changes
 - Incidence of cellulitis
- Your practitioner will often compare the limb to the unaffected side (assuming the lymphoedema is only affecting one side) using circumferential measurement techniques.
- As girth measurements are difficult to use with areas such as breast, trunk, genitalia or head/neck, diagnosis is based on clinical history and examination with a focus on changes to skin and the tissue under the skin.



4. WHY IS EARLY DIAGNOSIS IMPORTANT ¹

- Lymphoedema cannot be cured but early diagnosis can be extremely helpful. Early diagnosis can provide the opportunity to slow or minimise the progression of the swelling.
- With early diagnosis lymphoedema management can be applied earlier and reduce oedema and any associated risks.
- It is important to note that with other post cancer lymphoedema the onset of swelling may be delayed (for years).
- Pre-treatment assessment and monitoring for early detection is strongly advised.
- If you are concerned about body size changes following cancer treatment we advise you make an appointment with an Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner for a thorough assessment.

This is provided at East Gosford Physiotherapy and is a complex assessment which takes 60 minutes.





5. WHAT ARE THE EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF DEVELOPING LYMPHOEDEMA ? ²

- Transient swelling of a limb or body region
- Recurrent cellulitis
- Feeling stiffness, heaviness, or an ache in a body part
- Reduced mobility and range of a joint.
- Tightness of the affected body part

PLEASE NOTE:

One of the reasons an assessment is important by an Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner is to determine an early diagnosis. The above list of early warning signs can also indicate a number of conditions other than lymphoedema.

6. WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS OF DEVELOPING LYMPHOEDEMA



We don't know why some people develop lymphoedema and some don't as there are many factors we are yet to fully understand.

The main risk factors for secondary lymphoedema include:

- History of cancer surgery and removal of lymph nodes
- History of radiation therapy and damage to underlying lymphatics
- History of wounds, trauma or tissue damage
- History of recurrent infection
- Increased body mass index (BMI)
- Immobility

7. WHAT HAPPENS IF I LEAVE MY LYMPHOEDEMA UNTREATED?

- As lymphoedema is a progressive disease if left untreated swelling can progress and fluid in the body part can increase in volume.

- Skin changes can be accelerated, including thickening of the skin.

- Untreated lymphoedema can interfere with wound healing and the stagnant “protein rich” fluid can cause further tissue damage. This process can cause increased risk of infection, cellulitis, skin ulcers and sepsis.



- Increased swelling in a limb or body part can reduce movement and affect function.

- Uncontrolled lymphoedema of the legs may reduce mobility and quality of life.



8. WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE AN AUSTRALIAN LYMPHOLOGY ASSOCIATION ACCREDITED LYMPHOEDEMA PRACTITIONER?

Australian Lymphology Association (ALA) Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioners are professionals who are deeply committed to the effective treatment of their lymphoedema clients. To attain and maintain ALA accreditation, Practitioners are required to:

- Demonstrate commitment to lymphoedema management, research and education.
- Have post graduate training in lymphoedema care and have successfully completed accredited lymphoedema training.
- Maintain relevant skills and knowledge through participation in lymphoedema and specific Continued Professional Development.
- Have current professional indemnity insurance.
- Are compliant with the ALA's Code of Professional Conduct & Ethical practice.

For more information about ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioners go to www.lymphoedema.org.au

East Gosford Physiotherapy & Exercise Physiology has ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioners, Cancer Rehabilitation trained Physiotherapists and Exercise Physiologists available to help you with your lymphoedema management and care.

Our Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner profile can be found in the link below, by searching East Gosford

www.lymphoedema.org.au/accredited-nlpr/findapractitioner

If you would like to make an appointment with our Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner or with one of our Cancer Rehabilitation Physios, call us direct on 43237499.



9. LYMPHOEDEMA MANAGEMENT AND CANCER REHABILITATION AT EAST GOSFORD PHYSIOTHERAPY AND EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY-

How can we help you ?

East Gosford Physiotherapy & Exercise Physiology offers full management of lymphoedema, or for those at risk of developing lymphoedema, using Complex Lymphoedema Therapy.

For more information about our services go to-
<https://eastgosfordphysio.com.au/cancer-rehabilitation/>

Download our Lymphoedema fact sheet here-
<https://eastgosfordphysio.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Lymphoedema-Flyer-Fact-Sheet-PDF.pdf>

Our comprehensive approach to lymphoedema management may include:

MANUAL LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE

- This is performed by our Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner.
- Manual Lymphatic Drainage involves a form of massage specific to the treatment of the lymphatic system.
- It aims to direct the flow of the lymphatic fluid from areas of congestion to the healthy nodes to facilitate clearance and reduce swelling.



COMPRESSION

- Compression is often required to reduce swelling and maintain the reduction.
- Compression may include bandaging and/or the fitting of compression garments or wraps.
- A thorough assessment will determine which form of compression is best, and if it is needs to be temporary or permanent.

EXERCISE

- The use of exercise is required to reduce risk factors and to manage Lymphoedema.
- Appropriate exercises are prescribed by our physiotherapist and exercise physiologists who are specially trained in lymphoedema management.

SKIN CARE

- Skin care is very important- due to the risk of fluid build-up causing skin infection.
- Our management educates clients on how to protect their skin and reduce the risk of infection

EDUCATION AND FOLLOW UP

- Periodic check ups are required for maintenance.
- This may include replacing compression garments, recording new measurements and prescribing any follow up treatment required.

PHYSIOTHERAPY FOR PAIN AND STIFFNESS

- Management of pain, scar tissue and stiffness is often required after cancer surgery, especially following mastectomy.
- Physiotherapy can help stop pain or stiffness becoming a barrier to successful cancer rehabilitation.

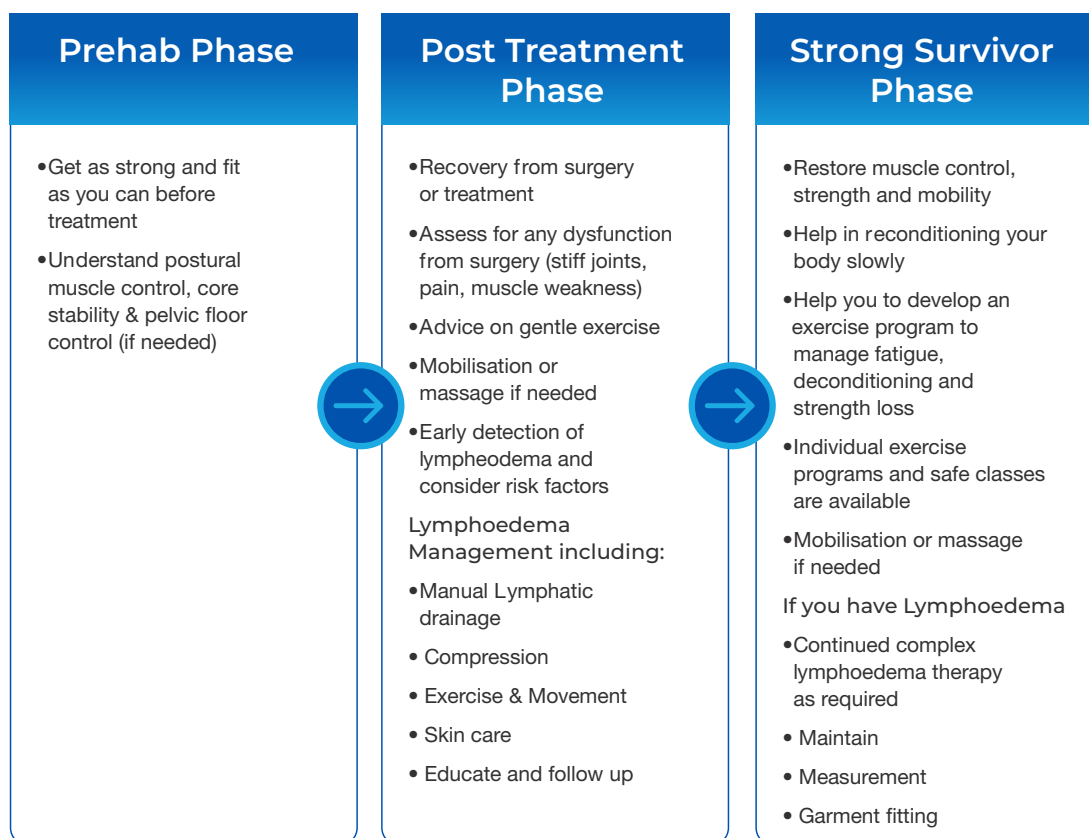


10. INTRODUCING OUR STRONG SURVIVOR JOURNEY ⁴

Cancer diagnosis can be a journey, and maintaining your physical and mental health through this process can have a dramatic effect on your life after cancer. Our physiotherapists and exercise physiologists can help you through this journey.

Strong Survivor – Cancer Rehabilitation is a program designed by East Gosford Physiotherapy and Exercise Physiology and is aimed at helping men and women recover and thrive after cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Strong Survivor works in the 3 phases of your journey



OR book online via our website www.eastgosfordphysio.com.au



11. WHAT EXERCISE CLASSES ARE AVAILABLE DURING MY CANCER REHABILITATION?

– Keep Moving Strong Survivor

Are you recovering from Cancer or the effects of Cancer Treatment and lost your way with exercise?

Do you feel fatigued and deconditioned after your surgery, chemo or radiotherapy?

Do you have lymphoedema and not sure what exercise is safe?

You know you really should start to exercise again after your treatment, but are not suited to a gym or boot camp, and not ready for a senior citizens class. Are you a bit “lost” and don’t know “how” or “where” to exercise after your cancer diagnosis and treatment and not really sure what is safe?

Our Program is called **Keep Moving- Strong Survivor** and is an exciting new exercise programme designed by East Gosford Physiotherapy & Exercise Physiology to help you in your 50’s, 60’s, 70’s and 80’s to Keep Moving after or during cancer treatment and get healthy again.

Keep Moving- Strong Survivor is run and closely supervised by physios and exercise physiologists in a small group in East Gosford.



It is using the latest research in cancer rehabilitation to offer an exercise class for people who may have stopped or lost the habit of exercise and developed “barriers” to exercise, after their cancer diagnosis.

Our 30 years at East Gosford Physio has taught us some tricks to help people start and keep exercising, wherever they may be in their cancer journey, like making it safe, fun and social.

So come and join us at East Gosford Physio and Exercise Physiology for a Keep Moving -Strong Survivor class.

We suggest you make an appointment for an assessment with our specially trained Lymphoedema physio, so we know you are safe to join in and your first class is free.

Look at this link for more info about Keep Moving- Strong Survivor

<https://youtu.be/fN2s3hZoSQE>



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