



# LYMPHEDEMA

More than 75% of HNC patients will experience lymphedema during or after treatment for their cancer. The body's lymphatic system is made up of lymph fluid, vessels, and nodes that work together to fight infection. When the system is damaged by radiation or surgery, lymph fluid cannot flow through the system the way that it should. It collects under the skin, causing swelling.

## SYMPTOMS

- Swelling in any part of the face, head, or neck, especially swelling that feels hard to the touch
- Pain, stiffness, or decreased range of motion in the neck or shoulders
- A feeling of tight skin or muscles in the face, head, or neck
- New aching, tingling, numbness, or other discomfort in the face, head, or neck
- Changes in vision or hearing
- Difficulty breathing, swallowing, eating, or speaking
- Feeling congested
- Pain in the ears

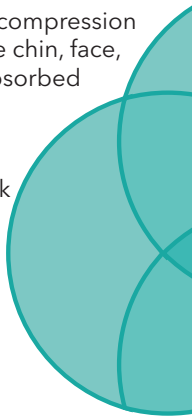
## REDUCING YOUR RISK

Help lower your risk of developing lymphedema by:

- Preventing injury and infection to the head and neck
- Exercising and maintaining a healthy weight
- Using proper body mechanics and sleeping positions
- Protecting your skin and keeping it moisturized
- Avoiding tight clothing, scarves, and jewelry around the neck

## TREATING LYMPHEDEMA

- Manual lymphatic drainage (gentle, circular massage strokes that promote the flow of lymph fluids out of the area)
- Pneumatic compression pumps, or compression bands or garments worn around the chin, face, and head that help fluids to be reabsorbed by the body
- Exercises to strength muscles and increase range of motion in the neck and shoulders
- Self-care including techniques to reduce your risk of worsening lymphedema



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