

Title of Document:

Edema

Overview:

This document contains a basic definition of Edema after spinal cord injury and some of the causes and treatments. This information has been gathered from a variety of reputable sources; however, it is important that you discuss your situation with your medical care team because everyone is different.

Definition:

Edema, or swelling caused by fluid collecting in the tissues, usually occurs in a part of the body that is not moved frequently and is below the level of the heart (i.e., the feet, legs and hands).

Description:

The skin over areas of edema becomes thin and pale and injures easily because of poor circulation. It is common after SCI and needs to be prevented and treated as a serious issue.

Prevention and Treatments:

Discuss options with your doctor before trying anything new. Here are some suggestions that have worked for our Peers and/or are recommended by professionals.

- Raise your legs above the level of your heart periodically during the day and at bedtime.
- Wear pressure stockings if you are able to
- Discuss massage as an option with your physician
- Consider drinking fluids that aid with circulation, such as black organic coffee (no more than two cups per day) or green tea/black tea (2 cups per day) or ginger tea.
- Consider Green Juicing as a means to keep down swelling and inflammation. Here's a quick recipe: Juice the combination of 1/2 bag spinach, 1 green apple, a handful of cilantro or parsley and 1-2 cups of water. You might also want to try cucumber, celery, kale, carrots, and beets as alternatives. You might not want to go to the expense of buying a juicer before trying this. You may find that there are some health food/juice stores where you could buy

something. The nutritionist who provided us with this information recommends that you get juices made in front of you rather than packaged juices as they are supposedly less nutritious.

- Exercise - this will increase blood circulation. You may wish to consider even passive exercise for your legs as a means of enhancing circulation. The active/passive trainer is touted as having this benefit and works basically as a stationary hand/leg cycle which you can use in either a passive mode or one where you are actively cranking the pedals.

Useful References:

Nutrition is an important part of healthy living and is especially important after an injury to prevent further complications.

You may wish to call the provincial health line and follow the prompts to reach a nutritionist, at 8-1-1.

SCI-BC has had a nutritionist deliver several webinars, and she herself is someone with an SCI. Her website is www.fruitfulelements.com There is a link to a new book on diet and SCI, which is downloadable for a small cost.