

Early Symptoms of Lymphedema

1. Subtle Swelling

- Mild swelling in the arm, breast, chest, or hand (may come and go at first).
- Jewelry, sleeves, or bras feel tighter on the affected side.
- A “pitting” sensation when pressing into the skin (small dent remains briefly).

2. Skin Changes

- Feeling of heaviness, fullness, or tightness in the skin.
- Skin may appear shiny or stretched.
- Clothing/underwear leaving deeper marks than usual.

3. Sensations in the Arm/Chest

- Aching, tingling, or a sense of heaviness in the arm or chest wall.
- Reduced flexibility in the arm, hand, or shoulder.
- Feeling like the limb is “thicker” or different from the other side.

4. Hand & Finger Symptoms

- Rings feel tighter.
- Difficulty bending fingers or making a fist.
- Hand looks puffier compared to the unaffected side.

5. Increased Risk Signals

- Repeated infections (redness, warmth, tenderness).
- Sudden unexplained flare of swelling after activity, heat, or air travel.

 Tell patients: *“If you notice any of these signs, don’t ignore them. Report them to your doctor or lymphatic therapist immediately. Early management can stop lymphedema from progressing.”*