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Lymphatic congestion or stagnation is a serious problem for many cancer patients. Undigested food, infectious material, dead cells, toxins, and other debris have to be carried off by the lymphatic system. Thickened and sluggish lymph results in swelling and discomfort.

The Lymphatic System is a drainage network of fluid, organs and vessels that is responsible for the removal of cellular debris, large proteins, foreign bodies, pathogenic agents (bacteria, viruses, toxins etc.) and excess fluid from the extracellular spaces. The lymph moves through the lymph nodes, which act as active purification centers.

The primary lymphoid organs include the bone marrow and thymus. The secondary lymphoid organs include lymph nodes, spleen, appendix, tonsils, adenoids and Peyer's patches (lymphoid tissue present in the small and large intestines). Their function is to defend the body against aggressive agents entering the body or to destroy accumulated wastes.

There are approximately 6 to 10 liters of lymph in the body, compared to 3.5 to 5 liters of blood. About 1.5 to 2 liters of lymph per day circulate throughout the whole body. Efficient activation of the lymphatic circulation can increase this number from 10 to 30 liters per day. Lymph vessels slowly increase in size, moving lymph toward its entry into the circulatory system, behind the heart. The lymphatic system is not connected to the heart, so it has to rely upon some other method, usually muscular contraction, to create the necessary pumping action needed to move lymph. The lymphatic system is filled with millions of one-way valves, which allow lymph fluid to flow in one direction only - usually upward and away from gravity.

Lymph vessels can become clogged with protein deposits or the flow can stagnate or even stop for reasons such as fatigue, stress, infection, emotional shock, lack of physical activity and dehydration. This can result in tissue swelling (edema) - lymphostatic edema results from the abnormal accumulation of protein in the lymph vessel, along with osmotically held fluids in the interstitial space (lymphedema). Consequently, as toxins accumulate, cells are unable to function properly resulting in various metabolic and infectious problems.

The most important methods of promoting lymphatic circulation are external massage, muscular activity, vigorous exercise and adequate hydration.

Lymph passes through processing and collection centers called lymph nodes which:

Act as filtration and purification stations for the lymph circulation

Capture and destroy toxins

Trap cancer cells in order to destroy

Concentrate the lymph, reabsorbing about 40% of the liquid present in the lymph

Produce lymphocytes and monocytes.

Lymph nodes offer 100 times more resistance to lymph flow than the whole rest of the system put together. The production of lymphocytes is increased when the flow of lymph is increased through the nodes. There are from 400 up to 1,000 nodes in the human body, more than one-half located in the abdomen.

The American medical community historically ignores lymph stagnation as a possible cause of disease. Despite this, the following conditions are examples that are reported to improve through improved lymphatic drainage:

Allergies, prostatitis, chronic sinusitis, heart disease, eczema and other skin conditions, fibrocystic disease, chronic fatigue, repetitive parasitic infections, MS, edema, lupus erythematosus, inflammation, high blood pressure, bacterial infections, viral infections, puffy eyes, low back pain, cancer, ear or balance problems, arthritis, headaches, cellulite, excessive sweating and obesity.

Treatments:

The use of a small trampoline called a rebounder is a popular way to reduce lymphatic congestion. It is claimed that rebounding is so efficient in stimulating the lymph flow that some call it "Lymphocizing". The up-and-down rhythmic bouncing causes the one-way valves to open and close simultaneously increasing lymph flow many times over.

Massage has been shown in numerous studies to relieve stress, improve circulation and lymph flow, enhance immune function, relieve muscle and joint pain, and correct various disorders of the muscles and nerves. Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) is an advanced therapy in which the practitioner uses a range of specialised and rhythmic gentle pumping techniques to move the skin in the direction of the lymph flow. This promotes lymph flow, which in turn removes waste products.

Chronic dehydration can slow and stagnate the flow of lymph. This is just another reason to make a serious effort to drink 8 glasses of water a day.

There are homeopathic drainage products and programs designed to resolve lymph-related problems and various light/laser or electrical devices developed to reduce lymphostatic edema, often used with lymphatic massage

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