

# Patient Safety ALERT – RISK OF DEVELOPING OR EXACERBATING LYMPHOEDEMA IN THE UPPER LIMB



**Lymphoedema is a long term condition which occurs when the lymph system is damaged or blocked. Protein rich fluid builds up in the soft tissue and causes swelling.**

**Those who have lymphoedema are people with swelling present in an arm/s. Those at risk of developing lymphoedema are those who have had one or more axillary lymph nodes removed, with or without radiotherapy and those with cancer present in their nodes. Lymph node removal compromises immunity.**

**Procedures to avoid on the affected side are:**

- Venepuncture
- Injections
- Cannulation
- Capillary blood glucose tests
- Central venous access
- Blood pressure recordings
- Acupuncture

**The aim is to avoid additional lymphatic stress and the risk of infection on the affected or at risk upper limb/s.**

**FOR ACTION:  
Ensure that ALL STAFF are aware to avoid procedures on the compromised limb/s, unless in a life threatening situation.**

**For more information, please contact the Lymphoedema Service Tel: 01271 341551 or the Breast Care team 01271 349115.**