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# Spring Allergies & Lymphedema: What You Need to Know

## Introduction

Spring brings warmer temperatures, blooming flowers, and longer days—but for many, it also comes with seasonal allergies. If you have lymphedema, allergies can add another layer of discomfort, potentially increasing inflammation and fluid retention. Understanding the connection between allergies and lymphedema can help you manage symptoms more effectively and enjoy the season with ease.

## How Seasonal Allergies Affect Lymphedema

When you experience allergies, your body releases histamines in response to pollen, dust, or other irritants. Histamines cause inflammation, contributing to increased swelling and fluid

buildup in individuals with lymphedema. Additionally, allergy-related congestion and sinus pressure may impact overall lymphatic flow, making it more challenging for your body to drain excess fluid efficiently.

Common allergy symptoms that may impact lymphedema include:

- Increased swelling due to inflammation
- Sinus congestion, leading to sluggish lymphatic drainage
- Fatigue and dehydration, which can worsen lymphedema symptoms
- Skin irritation or flare-ups in affected limbs

## **Managing Allergies While Living with Lymphedema**

While you can't avoid pollen and allergens entirely, there are several ways to minimize their impact and keep your lymphedema symptoms under control:

### **1. Stay Hydrated**

Dehydration can thicken lymphatic fluid, making drainage more difficult. Drinking plenty of water helps maintain your lymphatic system and flushes out allergens.

### **2. Choose Allergy-Friendly Foods**

Certain foods can help reduce inflammation and support your immune system. Consider adding these to your diet:

- **Quercetin-rich foods** (apples, onions, kale) help stabilize histamine release.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids** (salmon, walnuts, flaxseeds) support anti-inflammatory responses.
- **Turmeric and ginger** contain natural anti-inflammatory properties.

### **3. Wear Compression Garments Consistently**

Allergy-induced inflammation may cause increased swelling. Wearing your compression garments as prescribed can help maintain proper lymphatic flow and prevent fluid buildup.

### **4. Reduce Pollen Exposure**

- Check pollen counts daily and limit outdoor activities during high-pollen times (typically morning and early evening).
- Keep windows closed to prevent allergens from entering your home.
- Shower and change clothes after spending time outside to remove pollen from your skin and hair.

### **5. Practice Gentle Lymphatic Drainage Techniques**

Self-massage, deep breathing exercises, and movement-based therapies like yoga can help support your lymphatic system and counteract allergy-related swelling.

## **6. Consult Your Healthcare Provider About Allergy Medications**

Certain over-the-counter and prescription allergy medications can help, but some decongestants may cause fluid retention. Talk to your doctor about the safest options for managing allergies without worsening lymphedema symptoms.

## **Spring Should Be Enjoyable—Not Uncomfortable**

By taking proactive steps to manage seasonal allergies, you can minimize their impact on your lymphedema and fully embrace the joys of spring. Stay hydrated, eat anti-inflammatory foods, and protect yourself from allergens to keep swelling and discomfort under control.



## **Interested in taking an ACOLS Course?**

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