

Lymphedema Association of SK held an education day May 10, 2019. Kelly Lloyd discussed reasons for chronic limb swelling lasting more than 3 months with no response to medication or elevation (which is lymphedema). The close relationship to veins was also discussed, as all tissues need drainage of blood and fluids. Healthy lymphatics can compensate for damaged veins to a limited extent. Sometimes chronic swelling is caused by organ failure; whether liver, kidney, heart, or damaged lungs. High blood pressure is a common cause of swelling. Medical conditions require the care of a physician for good control.

Obesity is further cause of chronic swelling (lymphedema). Veins and lymphatics are challenged to return blood and fluids when adipose tissue obstructs flow. A consequence of chronic edema (lymphedema) is stimulation of fat cells to grow. In essence, fat leads to growth of more fat. As quality of life declines, mobility decreases and depression increases. The Feoldi clinic in Germany, state that depression contributes to obesity. As swelling increases, depression leads to more depression. Obesity occurs more often when a fast food restaurant is near your house. Presently, most people eat and drink all day long paying little attention to hunger cues. The German Feoldi Clinic and Dr Karen Herbst in Arizona describe Lipedema fat which is very complex, painful, and "hard to burn". They suggest that 11% of women have lipedema fat which can also cause chronic swelling (lymphedema).

Carol Udey, Registered Dietician, from NITHA shared details of the new Canada's Good Guide, which is now based on research findings. All grains should be whole grain which add fibre to carbohydrate- rich foods. Protein- rich seeds like quinoa, chia, pumpkin seeds, and hemp hearts are great grain substitutes. Refined foods, sugars, salt, and fat should be avoided. After the age of 2, water should be the beverage served with meals. Half of a meal should be vegetables. More meat replacements should be chosen. Home-made choices, dining at home with others, and increased awareness of a dining experience are suggested. Pre-planning for home cooking can be far healthier. Choices can avoid fast "processed" foods, additives, sugar, fat, and salt. The outer perimeter of a grocery store has the produce, meat, and bread with the least "processing". Much can be learned from reading labels. The art of cooking has faded. When shopping, plan for several meals in advance. Do not shop while hungry. Equipped with a list and planning, you can bring all ingredients home for preparation of foods like homemade macaroni and cheese (from scratch) instead of making processed " Kraft dinner" or other white pasta. Like brown rice, brown pasta is healthier. Cranberries (rich in anti-inflammatory compounds) can be added to smoothies, yogurt, baking, and entrees other than turkey. Use the computer to search out other healthy choices like omega 3 fats.

Pre roasting lean ground-beef (and freezing for later) makes short work of a pot of chilli or soup. Just keep the beans, mushrooms, kernel corn, and other canned or frozen veggies on hand. Add chilli sauce, soup stock, or both. A jar of salsa can be added to soup or chili. Healthy food choices can control weight. With the addition of exercise, the body can be toned and sculpted. Weight can be controlled or lost. As with diabetic carb prescriptions, there are many ways food can be medicinal and add to a healthy lifestyle.

Dr Ilie Haynes described metabolic syndrome which not only relates to diabetes, but obesity as well. Inflammation damages blood vessels and contributes to chronic diseases effecting multiple organs. Stress also has potential for damaging effects as well.

Robin Gyoerick, Exercise Therapist (bachelors in Physical Education) with the Sask Health Authority shared ways exercise can improve lymphatic drainage. She provided elastic therabands to participants and demonstrated their use. Exercise strategies and goals were discussed. Exercise is medicine. 150 minutes of brisk walking or similar is a goal. Some should work less on their journey to 150 minutes, others should work beyond 150 min. Hand biking is great for arm muscles. Swimming and cycling are great options as well. Resistance (weight training) should be added, as beneficial for both muscles and bones. Resistance work should be done at least weekly. Many people see improvement in cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood glucose with exercise. Exercise is a great for mood elevation and it helps us deal with stress.

Participants learned much about how obesity both contributes to chronic limb swelling and further complicates limb swelling by causing fat cells to grow (and causing inflammation). Kelly Lloyd demonstrated manual lymph drainage and compression as components of Complex Decongestive Therapy. Skin care, stretching, exercise are important elements of care. Prevention of infection not only relates to avoidance of injuries and wound care, but elimination of the swelling. Function of the immune system is impaired by uncontrolled swelling. Not only is nutrient delivery and waste removal impacted. Movement of important immune cells are impeded by fibrotic physical barriers. People impacted by chronic swelling (lymphedema) need education as to reasons to adhere to care suggested by providers (and how to access care). Check the [sasklymph website](http://sasklymph.com) for more information.