

# Researchers test bandaging for swollen arm

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As a complication of treatment, breast cancer patients may develop swelling in the arm, called lymphedema, which can last a long time.

But there's no difference if simple compression bandages or a complicated daily lymphatic massage are used as treatment, McMaster University researchers have found.

"In the future, patients who receive or can only afford elastic sleeves and gloves should be comforted knowing that their care has not been compromised," said Dr. Ian Dayes, associate professor of oncology for the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine and principal investigator of the study.

The research was published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

The arm swelling is a complication affecting six to 30 per cent of [breast cancer patients](#) and can result in discomfort, reduction of [arm function](#), infection and emotional upset. Patients who are obese, have infection or additional surgery or radiation are more likely to have the swelling complication which can last indefinitely.

The research team followed more than 100 women at six Canadian [breast cancer treatment](#) centres for a full year. One group wore elastic compression sleeve and glove garments on the arm for 12 waking hours a day.

The other group received an hour of lymphatic drainage massage from

trained therapists each weekday for four weeks along with exercise and skin care. Participants had compression bandages left on the arm and hand for the rest of the 24-hour day. After the month of treatment, these [patients](#) wore an elastic compression sleeve and glove for daytime wear, the same as the first group.

Regular measurements of arm volume, arm function and quality of life were taken, but no appreciative difference was found between the treatments.

Provided by McMaster University

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