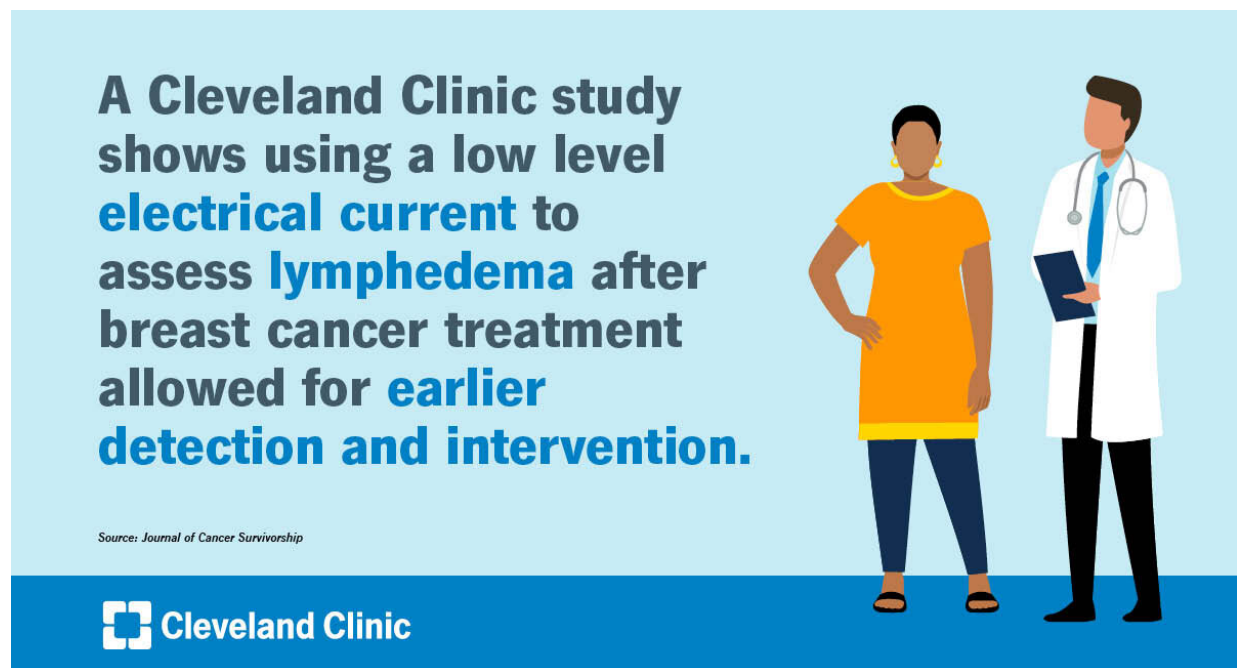



Non-invasive device more effective for early detection of lymphedema after breast cancer

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A Cleveland Clinic study shows using a low level **electrical current** to assess **lymphedema** after breast cancer treatment allowed for **earlier detection and intervention.**

Source: Journal of Cancer Survivorship

 Cleveland Clinic

The image is a promotional graphic for a study. It features a light blue background with a darker blue footer. On the left, there is a text block with a headline in bold black and blue font. Below the headline is a small source attribution. On the right, there is an illustration of a female patient in an orange top and dark pants standing next to a male doctor in a white lab coat with a stethoscope, holding a clipboard. The Cleveland Clinic logo and name are in the bottom left corner of the graphic.

Credit: Cleveland Clinic

Some breast cancer survivors may experience lymphedema, a condition that causes painful swelling of their arm or hand after undergoing surgery or radiation.

"Lymphedema can really cause discomfort and can cause loss of function. Women can have trouble lifting their arm or using their hand,"

said Chirag Shah, MD, director of breast radiation oncology for Cleveland Clinic. "It can lead to secondary infections of the arm called lymphangitis and really have a significant impact, psychosocial impact and quality of life impact."

Previously, women were often diagnosed using a tape measure. However, Dr. Shah's recent research shows a device which uses low-level electrical currents is much more effective.

He said it does a better job with early detection, making the condition easier to treat.

When it comes to treatment, it varies based on the severity. In some cases, a woman may be given a compression garment to wear to help with swelling.

Physical therapy and surgery may also be necessary.

"I think it depends typically on when we catch [lymphedema](#), so if we catch lymphedema later in the process, it's often felt to be irreversible if there is a significant volume increase and a lot of chronic changes have set in," he said. "But, if it is caught early there is data, including data from the PREVENT trial, showing that [women](#) are not progressing to chronic lymphedema and they're actually having that resolved."

Dr. Shah said his take home message for those who underwent treatment for [breast cancer](#) is to be proactive about their risk for lymphedema and to talk to their physician about any concerns.

The research was published in the *Journal of Cancer Survivorship*.

More information: Pat Whitworth et al, Reducing rates of chronic breast cancer–related lymphedema with screening and early intervention:

an update of recent data, *Journal of Cancer Survivorship* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s11764-022-01242-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11764-022-01242-8)

Provided by Cleveland Clinic

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