Peripheral Edema

You have swelling in your legs *(peripheral edema*). This swelling is due to excess accumulation of salt and water in your body. **Edema may be a sign of heart, kidney or liver disease, or a side effect of a medication. It may also be due to problems in the leg veins**. Elevating your legs and using special support stockings may be very helpful, if the cause of the swelling is due to poor venous circulation. Avoid long periods of standing, whatever the cause.

Treatment of edema depends on identifying the cause. Chips, pretzels, pickles and other salty foods should be avoided. **Restricting salt in your diet is almost always needed.** Water pills *(diuretics)* are often used to remove the excess salt and water from your body via urine. These medicines prevent the kidney from reabsorbing sodium. This increases urine flow.

Diuretic treatment may also result in lowering of potassium levels in your body. Potassium supplements may be needed if you have to use diuretics daily. Daily weights can help you keep track of your progress in clearing your edema. You should call your caregiver for follow up care as recommended.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is markedly increased swelling, pain, redness or heat in your legs.
- You develop shortness of breath, especially when lying down.
- You develop chest or abdominal pain, weakness or fainting.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.

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