Healthline uses cookies to improve your site experience and to show you personalized advertising. Privacy Policy.

ACCEPT

REVIEWED

By Chris at 10:16 am, Oct 29, 2020

More information



## healthline

**SUBSCRIBE** 

# **Everything You Should Know About Pitting Edema**

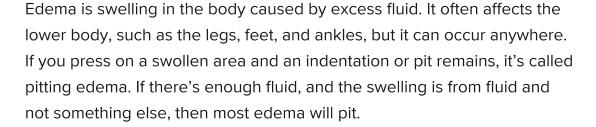
Medically reviewed by <u>Suzanne Falck, M.D., FACP</u> — Written by <u>Taylor Norris</u> — Updated on August 31, 2017

Symptoms Causes Risk factors Diagnosis Treatment

Complications Prevention Outlook







Pitting edema is either caused by a localized problem with veins in the affected area, or a systemic problem with your heart, kidneys, or liver function. Edema without pitting is more likely to be caused by issues with your thyroid or lymphatic system.

Either way, if you have edema, it means that excess fluid is trapped in some of your body tissues and it's not being properly carried away.

If you have pitting edema, it's important to work with your doctor to determine the cause.

ADVERTISEMENT

X

### **Symptoms**

Swelling in your body can cause your skin to feel tight. The swollen limb may also feel heavy due to extra fluid collecting in it. In addition to the swelling, pitting edema may be accompanied by:

f

- abnormal cough
- **\_**
- chest pain
- F
- shortness of breath
- heart murmur
- $\boldsymbol{\varphi}$
- low blood protein, especially if the swelling is in your abdomen
- $\checkmark$
- decreased stamina

Symptoms occur case by case, depending on what's specifically causing the edema.

X

ADVERTISEMENT



### **Causes**

- Pitting edema is a general problem caused by a variety of issues such as:
  - heart valve problems
  - low protein levels
  - deep venous thrombosis (DVT) blood clots, usually in the legs
  - severe lung disease
  - congestive heart failure
  - venous insufficiency
  - liver disease
  - kidney failure
  - obesity
  - pregnancy
  - · administration of intravenous fluids
  - medications
  - hot weather

X ADVERTISEMENT

3 of 12 10/29/2020, 10:16 AM





In many cases, pitting edema in pregnancy is not cause for concern. However, you should still talk to your doctor about your symptoms. They may want to evaluate you to check that the swelling is just a symptom of pregnancy and not caused by abnormal liver function, kidney problems, high blood pressure, or loss of protein in the urine, which may be a sign of preeclampsia.

**ADVERTISEMENT** 







- P
- People of all ages can get pitting edema because the risk factors are mostly related to diet and lifestyle. The main risk factors are:
- eating too much salt
  - a sedentary lifestyle
  - immobility when an extremity is in a dependent location
  - emphysema or other severe lung disease
  - heart disease
  - obesity
  - multiple pregnancies
  - lymph node surgery

ADVERTISEMENT

X

Voting is one way to take control in these uncertain times. Make sure you're election-ready, sign up for election reminders today.

#### **GO NOW**

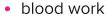
### **Diagnosis**

Pitting edema is a non-specific complaint. That means you'll need a comprehensive evaluation to diagnose the cause. Your primary care provider may begin some testing, and they may refer you to a cardiologist or a varicose vein specialist. Diagnostic testing for pitting edema can include:

examination for signs of water retention elsewhere in the body







chest X-ray

echocardiogram

"You should get a medical evaluation if the edema is a new finding and if it persists and interrupts your daily life," says Charlotte Bai, MD, a cardiologist and assistant professor at Rush University.

### Edema scale

To determine the extent of the pitting edema, your doctor will push on your skin, measure the depth of the indention, and record how long it takes for your skin to rebound back to its original position. They will then grade it on a scale from 1-4.

Grade	Depth	Rebound time
1	2 millimeter (mm) depression, or barely visible	immediate

**ADVERTISEMENT** 



5 of 12

3	5-6 mm depression	10-30 seconds
4	8 mm depression, or a very deep indentation	more than 20 seconds

ADVERTISEMENT











### **Treatment**

Depending on the cause, treatments can include:

- elevating the swollen limb
- venous vascular procedures
- compression stockings if the cause is chronic and your doctor recommends them
- diuretics if the cause is due to congestive heart failure, liver, or kidney disease

## **Complications**

Over time, your skin around the swelling may change and develop a "woody" appearance due to scarring. If the edema is from varicose veins, those may worsen.

Prolonged edema increases your risk of developing an infection in the



X

### Tips for prevention

Staying active can help. Avoid sitting for extended periods of time. If you work at a desk, set a timer to remind yourself to stand up and move around for a few minutes every hour. Exercise encourages blood flow, which may help reduce swelling. Talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise routine, however.



Pitting edema is common and can be medically treated and reversed. It shouldn't cause long-term problems, but it's important to see a doctor for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan.

#### **ADVERTISEMENT**

### Unlimited virtual care visits. Try a 14-day trial.

Avoid the hassle of waiting rooms and insurance with 4 YOUR HEALTH's membership-based virtual visits. Talk to board certified providers around the clock to get treatment for common conditions.

#### **LEARN MORE**

ADVERTISEMENT

7 of 12 10/29/2020, 10:16 AM

+ 6 sources



FEEDBACK: 🙁 🙂





### **READ THIS NEXT**

## Do You Lose Most of Your Heat Through Your Head?

Losing most of your heat through your head is a popular myth. Head heat loss is not the majority of body heat lost. Not even close. Years of my career...

**READ MORE** 







# When It Might Be Better for Your Health to Sleep in a Recliner

Medically reviewed by Alana Biggers, M.D., MPH

People with sleep apnea, GERD, or back pain may find they get a better night's sleep in a recliner than a bed. Here's why, as well as possible side...

**READ MORE** 

X

ADVERTISEMENT

# Is It Normal to Smell Myself Through My Pants?

Medically reviewed by Valinda Riggins Nwadike, MD, MPH

There are lots of reasons you may smell yourself through your pants, and most of them are very treatable. Here's what you need to know.

#### **READ MORE**

† \_\_

# The Causes and Symptoms of Dehydration in Older Adults



Medically reviewed by Shilpa Amin, M.D., CAQ, FAAFP



Older adults have a higher risk for dehydration due to lower fluid content in the body, a decreased thirst response, and medications or underlying...

**READ MORE** 

# Types of Body Fat: Benefits, Dangers, and More

Medically reviewed by <u>Daniel Bubnis</u>, <u>M.S.</u>, <u>NASM-CPT</u>, <u>NASE Level II-CSS</u>

ADVERTISEMENT

X

#### **READ MORE**

## **Traveling with Your Pet**

Going on vacation with your pooch or tabby offers a host of pampering possibilities these days. Many hotels now offer pet amenities, catering to the...

**READ MORE** 

f

y

# **How Much Water Should You Drink Per Day?**



Written by Kris Gunnars, BSc

Drinking enough water can help you burn fat and increase your energy levels. This page explains exactly how much water you should drink in a day.

**READ MORE** 

# 16 Simple Ways to Relieve Stress and Anxiety

ADVERTISEMENT

X

10 of 12 10/29/2020, 10:16 AM

Excess stress is a common problem for many people. Learn effective ways to relieve stress and anxiety with these 16 simple tips.

#### **READ MORE**

## How to Fall Asleep in 10, 60, or 120 Seconds

Medically reviewed by Deborah Weatherspoon, Ph.D., R.N., CRNA

You can do a lot of prep work to make the perfect sleep environment. But if that doesn't work, here are six other hacks to try.

**READ MORE** 

f

y

F

P

# Left Brain vs. Right Brain: What Does This Mean for Me?

Medically reviewed by <u>Deborah Weatherspoon, Ph.D., R.N., CRNA</u>

The two sides of your brain may look alike, but there's a big difference in how they process information. Here's what left brain vs. right brain means... **Get our wellness newsletter** 

Filter out the noise and nurture your inbox with health and wellness advice that's READ MORE al expertise.



X

11 of 12 10/29/2020, 10:16 AM

Newsletters Privacy Policy

Health Topics Terms of Use

License Our Content Do Not Sell My Info

Find an Online Doctor Privacy Settings

### **Contact Us**

Pitting Edema: Causes, Scale, Treatment, and More

© 2005-2020 Healthline Media a Red Ventures Company. All rights reserved. Our website services, content, and products are for informational purposes only. Healthline Media does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. See additional information.

f









About | Careers | Advertise with us

### **OUR BRANDS**

Healthline
Medical News Today
Greatist
PsychCentral

X

ADVERTISEMENT