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Edema

What is edema?

Edema (say: “eh-dee-mah”) is swelling or puffiness of parts of the body. Edema usually happens in the feet, ankles and legs. It can also affect the face and hands. Pregnant women and older adults often get edema, but it can happen to anyone.

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What causes edema?

Edema is caused by extra fluid that builds up in the tissues of your body. Many things can cause fluid to build up. Sometimes gravity pulls fluid down into your legs and feet. Sitting or standing still for too long can cause edema of the legs, especially in hot weather. Eating food with too much salt can make the problem worse. Edema can also be a side effect of taking certain medicines.

Some health problems, such as congestive heart failure, liver disease and kidney disease, can cause edema. You cannot catch edema from other people. It does not run in families.

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How do I know if I have edema?

Your doctor can tell whether you have edema by examining you. The skin over the swollen area may be stretched and shiny. Pushing gently on the swollen area for about 15 seconds will leave a dimple. If this happens, your doctor might want to do some tests to see what is causing your edema.

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What can I do to treat my edema?

The only way to treat edema is to treat the condition that is causing it. Your doctor might want you to take a medicine called a diuretic (say: “di-yoo-ret-tik”), which is also called a water pill.

It is important to see your doctor if you have edema, especially if you are pregnant. If it is not treated, your skin may keep stretching, which can lead to other problems. If you have edema and you start to have trouble breathing, call your doctor right away.

The following are some things you can do at home to keep the swelling down:

- Elevate your legs when you are sitting or lying down.
- If you have edema of the legs, wear support stockings. You can buy these at most drugstores. Support stockings put pressure on your legs to keep fluid from collecting in your legs and

ankles.

- Do not sit or stand for long periods of time without moving around.
- Follow your doctor's advice about limiting how much salt you eat.

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Source

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