

## **Axillary Web Syndrome**

Axillary web syndrome is a condition that may develop due to interruption or damage to the lymphatic system in the axillary region. It can also be referred to as “cording” because of its defining characteristic appearance as a tight cord of tissue being stretched under the skin.

### **What are the symptoms of axillary web syndrome?**

- Appearance of a tight cord of tissue being stretched underneath the skin.
- Pain and/or decreased ability to raise the arm straight up or out to the side.
- Pain when the cord is touched or pressed.
- Decreased ability to perform functional tasks throughout the day, such as reaching overhead to cabinets or to comb hair.

### **What causes axillary web syndrome?**

- Research continues to be conducted on this syndrome, but it is known that it can be caused by node dissection, trauma, lumpectomy, mastectomy or obstruction due to cancer.
- It is an inflammation of the lymphatics which can cause hardening of the tissue and scarring.
- At this point it is unclear as to why some individuals develop axillary cord syndrome and others do not.

### **Will axillary web syndrome resolve?**

- In most cases cords resolve in 2-3 months, but for others, cords relax yet have no impact on range of motion.
- You may notice thin cords breaking during movement or during therapy. Thicker cords will require more treatment to reduce pain and restore function.

### **What does treatment for axillary web syndrome consist of?**

- Occupational or physical therapy 2-3 times a week for soft tissue mobilization and therapeutic exercise.
- The goal of treatment is to restore range of motion, decrease pain, and restore functional use of arm.

### **What if any of the above symptoms present?**

- Cording is treatable and early detection is best. Bring your symptoms to the attention of any of your physicians so they can refer you for therapy.