

Compression managed leg ulcers

Patient Information

Community Tissue Viability Service

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Introduction

This leaflet has been produced for you to read at your leisure. It will help to relieve any anxieties you may have by answering questions about compression managed leg ulcers.

The Nurses undertaking your dressing change have had specialist training and therefore will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

In order for compression therapy to be commenced a lower leg assessment and Ankle Brachial Pressure Index (ABPI) will be completed by a lower leg assessor.

What is an ulcer?

An ulcer is a break in the skin that is present for 4 weeks or more. Ulcers can occur for many different reasons. Compression therapy is used to treat venous and mixed ulcers.

In normal veins the flow of blood always circulates upwards towards the heart, with valves preventing the blood from flowing backwards. The large muscles in the calf squeeze the veins to empty when walking and the valves stop the veins from refilling when the muscle relaxes. When this system becomes damaged the blood flows the wrong way.

Compression therapy is used to support the veins and prevent the back flow of blood in the lower limb, helping to heal your wound.

Lower limb assessment

First of all, you will be asked to lie comfortably on an examination couch or your bed if you are seen at home. It is important that you feel relaxed and free from anxiety. The assessment can take approximately one hour. The risks and benefits of compression will also be discussed at this stage.

The Nurse will ask a few questions about your past medical history. This is a good opportunity for you to get to know each other and for you to ask questions.

A photograph may be taken of your wound. The photograph is useful to record the progression of your ulcer and will be repeated regularly.

Once the Nurse has examined the ulcer and listened to your medical history, they will know what type of leg ulcer you have. The Nurse will take the blood pressure in your arms and ankles using a Doppler ultrasound. This is a painless procedure and is nothing to worry about. The Doppler will be repeated every 3-12 months.

Once compression therapy has commenced, if you experience increased pain, pins & needles, or a change of sensation or colour to your feet, remove the compression and contact your health care professional.

What you can do to help heal your ulcer

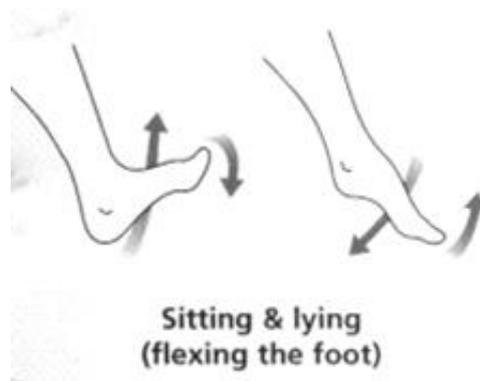
If possible go for a walk, this encourages the calf muscles in your leg to work, which helps the veins to pump the blood back up the leg. This clears congestion and reduces the swelling.

When resting, don't sit with your legs down for long periods of time. Try to put your feet up, ideally raising your legs higher than your hips. This can be done by lying on your couch or intermittently resting on your bed throughout the day. This helps to prevent your ankles from swelling and allows your legs to drain.

Calf muscle exercises

When resting with your legs raised, do simple exercises:

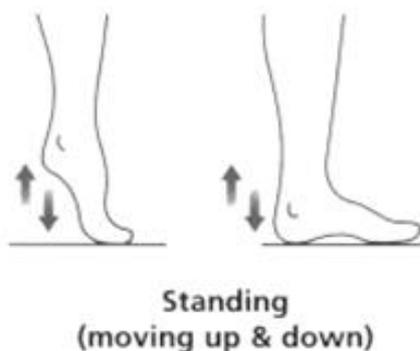
1. Slowly and firmly point your foot towards the floor, and then bring it back as far as it will go.



2. Slowly and firmly rotate your foot, making circular movement with pointed toes, first clockwise, then anticlockwise.



3. With your feet flat, lift your heels whilst keeping your toes on the floor, hold for a few seconds and place heels back down on the floor.



Do each exercise 10 times and repeat throughout the day.

Sensible diet

Being overweight puts a strain on your veins. Try to reduce your weight by eating a balanced diet – ask your Nurse for more information.

Ulcers need extra nourishment to help the healing process to take place. It may be necessary to take extra vitamin supplements to aid healing. Your Nurse will advise you about this.

Things to avoid

Avoid excess heat by not sitting too close to the fire/or other sources of heat.

Your Treatment

Your treatment goals, options and plan will be discussed and agreed with you. Compression is available in many different forms, including different types of bandaging, hosiery and velcro wraps. Speak to your Nurse if you wish to discuss any of these options.

As part of your treatment you may be asked to purchase a bowl and liners. This allows for effective cleansing of your lower leg and is an important part of your treatment. This should be done weekly.

Please use this space to write notes/reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient_information/leaflets/

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in the department/ward.

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