

## Caring for your legs

*In addition to wearing compression therapy the following actions will assist your venous leg ulcer to heal*

### *Exercise*

Walk as much as you are able to.

When walking use a heel-toe action (don't shuffle)

Avoid standing for long periods of time.

### *Leg elevation*

When sitting, elevate your legs on a footstool or lie on a couch with your foot above the level of your heart if possible.

When sitting, do not cross your legs.

### *Diet and Nutrition*

Maintaining a normal weight and a healthy diet are important.

If your appetite is poor, or you are underweight or overweight, talk to your nurse or doctor for a referral to a dietician.

### *Skin Care*

Wash your leg with a gentle cleanser or soap.

Moisturise your legs regularly. Skin around a venous leg ulcer can get dry and scaly or have eczema. Sometimes steroid creams or zinc bandages can treat this.

Do not apply moisturizer directly on the wound or between the toes.

### *Compression socks*

Once your venous leg ulcer has healed it is recommended that compression socks are worn daily to help prevent further venous leg ulcers.

Talk to your health professional about the best socks for you.

### **Your compression socks are:**

Product: \_\_\_\_\_

Size and Style: \_\_\_\_\_

Compression amount: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Care of your Venous Leg Ulcer



*The following recommendations apply to anyone with vein problems (Chronic Venous Insufficiency).*

*It is important these recommendations are followed to reduce the risk of getting a venous leg ulcer or a venous leg ulcer recurring.*

## About Venous Leg Ulcers

*A venous leg ulcer is a wound between the knee and ankle joint that is slow to heal.*

The most common reason that a wound on the leg does not heal is because of problems with the veins in the leg (Chronic Venous Insufficiency)

The veins are blood vessels in the legs that carry blood back to the heart. Sometimes, if the veins in the leg are not working properly, the blood collects in the lower legs and causes swelling and skin problems.

The swelling may change what your skin looks like (colour) and feels like (texture). It can cause skin to dry out or leak fluid. If a wound is present on the skin, it is not able to heal well because of the underlying vein problems.

If this wound persists it is called a venous leg ulcer.

## You might have a Venous Leg Ulcer if >>>

- You get swelling of your leg that is usually worse in the evening or after standing or sitting for a while
- The skin above your ankle is stained a brownish colour
- The skin on your leg is, itchy and scaly

## A Venous Leg Ulcer might >>>

- Leak a lot of fluid (ooze)
- Be shallow (not deep)
- Look red and/or yellow (not black)
- Be unevenly shaped (not a circle)
- Seem to not get better or worse
- Be painful

## You may have a history of >>>

- Varicose veins or a family history of varicose veins
- Deep Vein Thrombosis (Blood clot in the leg)
- Pulmonary embolus (Blood clot in the lung)
- Being overweight
- Multiple pregnancies
- Standing for long periods
- Lack of ankle movement
- Previous slow to heal leg wounds
- Slow to heal leg wounds in other members of the family

## Treating Venous Leg Ulcers

*The best way to heal venous leg ulcers is with compression therapy using special bandages or socks.*

Compression therapy improves healing by helping nutrients and oxygen reach the skin.

It does this by;

- reducing the leg swelling
- returning blood to the heart &
- preventing blood flowing back down the leg

A wound dressing can help to contain ooze from the wound and maintain comfort, however;

*Without compression therapy your venous leg ulcer is much less likely to heal.*

Compression therapy should only be applied under the supervision of a qualified health professional. Talk to your nurse or doctor for the best treatment for you.