

Patient
Information

Venous ulcers

Self-management at home



GLOUCESTERSHIRE LEG ULCER SERVICE

Introduction

Leg ulceration is a common problem affecting about 1 to 2% of people in the United Kingdom.

Venous leg ulcers can appear suddenly or as a result of an injury to the leg. They are defined as an ulcer if they do not heal within 2 weeks.

In order to manage your venous leg ulcer, you have been advised by the specialist team to use an alternative compression system to compression bandages that you can manage yourself with less dependency on the community teams.

The alternative systems include:

- 2-layer hosiery kits
- Velcro-based adjustable compression systems

These can be worn over a suitable dressing which can be changed as necessary by yourself and allow you to retain some control.

Further information and your individualised care plan are included in the following sections.

If you need to see your community nurse or practice nurse regarding your ulcer, then you should show this booklet to them as it will help them to continue the correct treatment.

Reference No.

GHPI1573_01_23

Department

Leg Ulcer
Service

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Your Care Plan

Arterial assessment

ABPI: Right: _____ Left: _____

Date: _____

Date of reassessment: _____

Limb assessment

Ankle circumference: Right: _____ Left: _____

Calf circumference: Right: _____ Left: _____

Length: Right: _____ Left: _____

Management - Hosiery Kit

Compression hosiery kits can be an alternative to bandages for healing leg ulcers. A hosiery kit consists of a liner and a below knee, open toed compression stocking. These are worn one on top of the other and provide high compression. The combined compression allows leg ulcer healing without the bulk of bandages. This also allows you to change the dressing yourself as needed.

The stockings should be worn 24 hours a day and should remain firm but comfortable.

It is possible that the hosiery kit may get tighter towards the end of the day. This normally happens if your leg swells. Information on what you can do to help prevent this from happening are included in the 'What can I do to help my ulcers' section.

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Management - Adjustable Compression System

An alternative to compression bandages and hosiery is the use of adjustable compression systems, commonly known as adjustable Velcro® wrap devices. These devices provide graduated compression to the lower limb.

Compression wraps are ideal for use where access to healthcare professionals who are competent in compression bandaging is limited, such as residential homes, nursing homes and GP practices, or where patients wish to care for themselves.

Your leg ulcer specialist nurse will measure you for a Velcro® wrap if this is thought to be the best option for you. The nurse will demonstrate how to apply and remove the Velcro® wrap then check that you are happy to continue with these techniques at home.

The wrap should be worn 24 hours a day. You will be able to remove it for showering and redressing of your ulcer. If your wrap becomes tight, this is normally because of your leg swelling. Follow the advice in the section at the end of this leaflet to help prevent this.

Compression wrap: _____

Size: _____ Length: _____

Colour: _____

Order code: _____

For both hosiery kits and compression wraps

Your leg ulcer specialist nurse has recommended that the following dressing should be applied to your ulcer(s). These can be obtained on a repeat prescription from your GP. Please give the surgery the following information:

Name of dressing: _____

Size: _____

Frequency of dressing: _____

Order code: _____

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What can I do to help my ulcers?

A combination of the following is needed:

1. Elevate (raise) your legs for 2 hours 3 times a day, for example by lying on the bed or sofa. Try to raise your legs higher than your heart. This will help gravity pull the blood and fluid in the right direction, towards your heart, reducing any swelling.
2. Keep as active as you can to improve your circulation. Do not stand in one position for long periods of time. Exercising your ankle joint is recommended. You can do this by flexing your foot up and down for 5 minutes every hour.
3. Eat healthy, try to include plenty of proteins such as fish, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables in your diet. Some ulcers may need additional vitamins and minerals to help them heal. Try to maintain your ideal weight, as being overweight puts extra strain on your veins.
4. Take care of your feet – look out for any new changes in skin colour or new ulcers on your feet. Your toe nails should be cut on a regular basis.
5. Take care not to knock your legs, as many ulcers start following an injury.
6. Be aware of your skin temperature – too much heat can damage your skin. Avoid hot baths, hot water bottles or sitting too close to the fire. Wear thick socks or slippers instead.

Contact information

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