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Leg Ulcer Forum

Patient Information Leaflet Number 9

How can I help my venous leg ulcer to heal?

www.legulcerforum.org

I have a venous leg ulcer, how can I help it to heal?

You will be given a lot of information about wearing bandages and doing exercises. Your nurse will have discussed options with you, so that you are involved in decisions which affect you. There are lots of things you can do to help your ulcer heal and make you feel better while this is happening.

Wear your bandages or compression stockings. Bandages and stockings are the treatment.

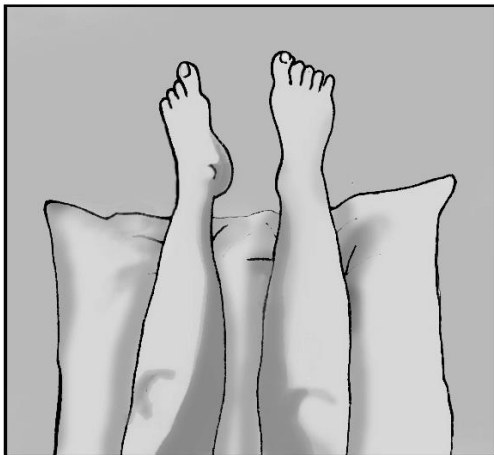
You have a problem with the circulation of blood in your veins. When the blood flow slows down, it can cause your ankles to swell. Wearing bandages or stockings, keeps the blood moving efficiently and helps to reduce the swelling in your ankles. This is why you are asked to wear them all the time.

Exercises are very important

You may have been given a leaflet explaining exercise in more detail. If not, ask your nurse or the person prescribing your care for a copy.

Put your feet up

Your ankles swell because of the slow blood flow. You will find that your ankles are less swollen when you have been in bed and it gets worse when you are sitting or standing. If you put your feet up so that they are higher than your hips, the swelling should be reduced.



Some people put their feet on the arm of the settee when they are sitting down, or put a cushion on a coffee table or footstool to rest their feet on. It does not matter, as long as your feet are higher than your hips, your heel is not under pressure and your knee is supported. It is important you feel comfortable.

If you have stiffness in your hips, it may be uncomfortable to sit with your feet up. It may be better to lie on the bed with a couple of pillows or cushions under your ankles with your heels floating off the pillow. It is helpful to get into a routine for your rest time, perhaps when there is something you enjoy on the radio or television. It is best to have your feet up at least three times a day. When you do not have your feet up, remember to do your exercises. It is important to do both.

Eat a healthy diet

As your ulcer heals, it uses a lot of goodness from the food you eat. It is important that your diet contains protein, vitamins and minerals. These are found in a varied diet of meat, fish, eggs and cheese, as well as fruit and vegetables. Please ask your nurse for information on healthy eating.

It is important to watch your weight. If you are overweight, you are putting an extra strain on the veins in your legs.

Drink plenty of fluids

It is important to drink plenty of fluid during the day - approximately 5 cups - (unless you have been told not to by the doctor). This helps your ulcer to heal and helps to keep your skin healthy. Don't worry that this will add to the swelling in your ankles. The fluid here is different. Water is the best drink. You can have other drinks, but be careful not to have too many caffeine drinks or those high in sugar. Alcohol can be used in moderation. Smoking should be avoided.

Skin care

The skin on your leg is very delicate. You may already apply cream to your face and you need to look after your legs just as carefully. While you are wearing your bandages the nurse will help you to wash your legs and apply a moisturiser. Avoid using anything that you know irritates your skin.

Keep in touch

When you have an ulcer you will see your nurse often. When the ulcer has healed you will still be advised to see the nurse from time to time. If you are worried about your legs it is important to tell the nurse as soon as possible. Problems might be a sore spot, itching or swelling. It is easier to sort problems out if they are found early.

Do other things

You might feel uncomfortable and that your ulcer is taking over your life. Try to do other things that you enjoy and discuss your worries with your nurse. It is important to get the ulcer healed as quickly as possible but any pain, discomfort or practical difficulties can also be dealt with along the way. This is much easier to do if you and your nurse work together and discuss any difficulties.

Leaflets in the range

- 1** Venous disorders of the lower leg explained.
- 2** What might happen if I have a venous problem?
- 3** Arterial disorders of the lower leg explained.
- 4** What is a Doppler Ultrasound test?
- 5** I am going for a Duplex Scan.
- 6** Understanding compression bandaging.
- 7** Understanding compression stockings.
- 8** Exercises to improve ulcer healing and help prevent recurrence.
- 9** How can I help my venous leg ulcer to heal?
- 10** Care of your skin

This leaflet is provided to offer advice, but does not intend or claim to cover all eventualities. If you are concerned, you must seek professional help from your Nurse, doctor or the person providing your care.

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