



# Caring for Arterial Leg Ulcers

## Information for Patients, Residents and Carers

### What is an arterial leg ulcer?

An arterial ulcer is a wound that has developed from a reduced blood supply, which affects the ability to heal. Common locations for this wound type is on the lower leg or foot, especially over toes, shins or ankles.

### A leg with poor blood supply may have:

- cool or cold skin
- reduced or absent pulse in the foot
- skin may look shiny, thin, tight and dry
- skin may be hairless
- toenails may be thick and brittle
- poor healing due to poor circulation of blood to the leg
- pain at rest, which is often worse when the leg is put up, the pain is often very severe.

### Who is at risk?

- Older people, particularly men
- Smokers
- People with high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes
- People who've had a heart attack or stroke
- People with rheumatoid arthritis or other vascular inflammations.

### How are arterial leg ulcers managed?

- Arterial ulcers can be very difficult to heal without improving the blood supply
- Your health practitioner will refer you to a vascular surgeon to consider whether treatment can improve your blood flow
- Follow the wound care plan provided by your wound care specialist
- You can help improve blood flow and healing yourself by:
  - » keeping your feet and legs warm
  - » moisturising your legs every day
  - » drinking plenty of water and eating a balanced diet
  - » controlling your diabetes if you are diabetic
  - » doing gentle leg and ankle exercises.



## How can I look after my leg once my wound has healed?

Be as healthy as you can! To help, you can:

- ✓ do regular gentle exercises
- ✓ eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of water
- ✓ stop smoking
- ✓ check your blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure levels regularly
- ✓ maintain a healthy weight
- ✓ wear well-fitting shoes and check feet for skin changes daily
- ✓ see a podiatrist for nail care.

If you have any concerns, please discuss them with your health care professional.

## Other brochures also available:

- Using Compression Bandages
- Using Compression Stockings

## Contact Information

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## References

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