



# Caring for Venous Leg Ulcers

## Information for Patients, Residents and Carers

### What is a venous leg ulcer?

A venous leg ulcer is a wound that develops because of damaged veins in the lower legs.

Leg veins work by moving blood from the feet and lower legs back to the heart. If the veins are damaged, the blood pools in the legs causing swelling (also known as oedema), pain and skin changes which increase the risk of your skin breaking down.

### Who is at risk?

Venous disease can be a problem that you are born with or that you get over time from:

- working in a job where you have to stand for long periods of time
- being overweight, and/or multiple pregnancies
- having had a blood clot, major injury, or serious infection in your leg.

### Signs and symptoms of venous disease?

Lower legs may:

- have varicose and/or spider veins
- swell
- have dark staining of the skin
- be dry, scaly and itchy
- become painful or ache, particularly after prolonged standing.

### Do you have a venous leg ulcer?

Contact Wound Innovations or your health professional to assess your wound and advise on the appropriate wound management.

### Compression and venous leg ulcers

- Compression bandages or stockings are the best way to treat venous leg ulcers. Your health professional will check the circulation in your leg before starting compression therapy
- Compression will help with healing an active ulcer, but should also continue to be used once the ulcer has healed to prevent reoccurrence
- See the Wound Innovations Compression Bandaging leaflet for further information.



## Caring for venous leg ulcers

### ✓ Wear compression therapy

Compression stockings and bandages help reduce the swelling in your legs and improves blood flow.

### ✓ Keep your wound covered

It is important to keep the wound healthy and moist to encourage your ulcer to heal as quickly as possible. Wound Innovations or your health professional can guide you in this.

### ✓ Perform gentle exercises every day

Gentle exercise, like walking, helps return fluid to the heart by engaging the calf-muscle pump that works when we walk. Doing ankle exercises can mimic this action to help return fluid to the heart when resting. To do this, point your toes back and forth, as far away from and as close towards the body. This is good to do when sitting or lying down.

✓ Elevate your legs to the level of your heart for 30 - 60 minutes or more at least once a day.

✓ Apply moisturiser each day to keep your skin in good condition and check your feet and legs.

## What NOT to do!

- ✗ Avoid crossing your legs or wear high heeled shoes
- ✗ Avoid standing or sitting for long periods of time
- ✗ Avoid injury to your lower legs
- ✗ Don't scratch your legs

## Other brochures also available:

- Using Compression Bandages
- Using Compression Stockings

## Contact Information

Wound Innovations: [1300 224 034](tel:1300224034)

[reception@woundinnovations.com.au](mailto:reception@woundinnovations.com.au) [www.woundinnovations.com.au](http://www.woundinnovations.com.au)

## References

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