Venous Leg Ulcers

What are venous leg ulcers?
The words ‘leg ulcer’ are used to describe a variety of open sores below the knee that are slow to heal.

Many of these ulcers are due to problems in the veins. The veins in the lower leg are under a lot of stress. Blood has to be pushed from your feet back up to your heart. The small valves in the veins must keep the blood flowing in one direction.

Blood may have trouble returning to the heart if there is damage to the veins or lower leg (calf) muscle pump. If the blood does not move toward the heart, fluid will leak into the tissues. This causes swelling and ulcers in the lower leg.
What causes venous leg ulcers?

- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
- Age (can start before 40 but increases with age)
- Gender (affects more women than men)
- Family history
- Smoking
- Pregnancy
- Obesity
- Trauma

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

DVT is a blood clot in the deep veins of the leg(s). The blood clot may get large enough to block the flow of blood in the affected leg(s). Some people can have a DVT and not know it.

What are the symptoms of venous leg ulcers?

- Foot and ankle swelling
- Brown discolouration of the skin around the ankles and lower leg
- White dots on the skin
- Ulcers vary in appearance, often beefy red in colour
- Medium to heavy drainage from the ulcer
- Ulcers have an irregular shape
- Pain may be present
- Skin around the area is itchy
Venous leg ulcer treatment

Treatment will:
› Try to improve the blood circulation
› Use wound dressings to help the ulcer heal

Ways to improve blood circulation:
• Spend time resting with your leg lifted above the level of your heart.
• Compression therapy helps blood return to the heart and control swelling. Pressure is applied to the affected lower leg(s) with stockings or many layers of bandages. Your doctor or nurse will talk with you about the best choice for you.

Wound dressing
The right wound dressing will help your ulcer heal. The choice of wound dressing will depend on the amount of drainage, the size of the ulcer, the condition of the surrounding skin, and if the ulcer is infected. Your doctor or nurse will discuss the best dressing for your ulcer with you.
How can a venous leg ulcer be prevented from coming back?

• Once the venous leg ulcer has healed, prevention must be your main goal.
• There is no cure for a venous leg ulcer, but it can be managed by wearing compression stockings. If you stop wearing your compression stockings, the venous leg ulcer may come back.
• Raise your legs above the level of your heart for 30 minutes, 4 times every day.

Tips for compression stockings:

• Put them on first thing in the morning and take them off in the evening before bed.
  › If your stockings feel too tight to put on, raise your legs above the level of your heart for 30 minutes and then try again.
• Only use the stockings for 6 months. Buy another pair after 6 months.
• Do not put your stockings in the dryer.
• Moisturize your legs at night after taking off your stockings.

If you have any questions, please ask.

We are here to help you.
For questions about your venous leg ulcer, please call

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At this phone number:

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Notes:

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