

Extra tips to help:

- Place 4 inches (10 cm) of thick boards or books under the foot of the bed to raise your legs while in bed
- Prop your feet up above the level of your chest while reading or watching TV
- Flex your ankles to pump your leg muscles and improve blood flow
- Mark your calendar to remind you when it is time for new stockings

Here are some exercises that help the veins pump blood back up to your heart. Ask your doctor about exercise to help keep your veins working.



You can take control of your venous ulcer and your life!

Notes:

This pamphlet has been brought to you by the Association for the Advancement of Wound Care (AAWC) through the volunteer support and clinical expertise of the AAWC Public Awareness Task Force.

OUR MISSION

AAWC is a non-profit, multidisciplinary Association that gives its members the opportunity, through numerous Association benefits and leadership opportunities, to build a collaborative community to facilitate optimal care for those who suffer with wounds.

DID YOU KNOW?

AAWC has a variety of membership and contribution options. Categories of membership exist for healthcare providers and their facilities, but also for wound care patients and their caregivers.

WOUND CARE PATIENTS NEED A VOICE!

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AAWC thanks Jeremy J. Hirsch for creating and contributing the illustrations of the blood vessels (Figures 1, 2 and 3) for this brochure.

Reference: Bolton LL, Corbett L, Bernato DL, Dotson P, Laras S, Merkle D, Patterson G, Phillips T, McNees P, Porter Riedesel P, Sheehan P and the AAWC Government and Regulatory Task Force. Development of a content-validated venous ulcer guideline. *Ostomy/Wound Management* 2006; 52(11):32-48.



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DRESS and COMPRESS for SUCCESS



A Patient Guide for Healing Your Venous Ulcer



Brought to you by the
Association for the Advancement of Wound Care

SO, you have a venous ulcer.

You and your health care provider can work together to help heal this ulcer and keep it from coming back.

What is a venous ulcer?

A venous ulcer is a wound caused by problems with blood flow in the legs. Blood flow is carried down to the legs by

arteries and back from the legs by veins. (Figure 1)



Figure 1



Figure 2

Veins can pump blood “up-hill” because they have valves that keep the blood from backing up. As you walk, your leg muscles also help pump blood back up to the heart. (Figure 2)

When the vein valves don’t open and close correctly, or the muscles are weak, blood backs up in the veins and causes swelling (also called edema). (Figure 3)

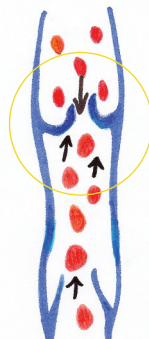


Figure 3

How did this happen to me?

Your veins may have been damaged by

- An earlier injury or surgery to legs
- A blood clot deep in a vein in your leg (“deep vein thrombosis” or DVT)
- Being older, having a family history of vein problems or being overweight
- Other conditions or activities your doctor may ask you about

How can I help heal my ulcer?

Start by working with your health care provider to make a plan for healing. You may need to have some tests to find out your problem. Keep all appointments and work together as a team to heal your ulcer

- Wear your compression bandage or stocking every day
- Use special dressings as directed over your ulcer
- Take brief walks and do leg exercises
- Elevate your legs above the level of heart whenever you are sitting
- Avoid standing for longer than 10 minutes at a time
- Avoid sitting for prolonged periods on planes, car trips or at work. Do ankle exercises often while seated
- Get up and move around often

Why do I need compression bandages or stockings?

Elastic or stretch type bandages and stockings will help reduce the swelling in your leg and help the veins work better. There are many types of compression bandages - some are changed daily and others can stay on for up to a week.

Why do I need special dressings?

Special wound dressings will

- absorb drainage
- help with pain around your ulcer
- help your body to heal the ulcer



What if my ulcer does not heal?

Most venous ulcers improve in a few months. Sometimes larger or older ulcers will need extra help. Your health care provider may suggest

- Electrical Stimulation
- Medications
- Surgery

Once my ulcer is healed...



- You need to wear compression stockings every day for the rest of your life
- They should be put on first thing in the morning and removed at bedtime
- This will help to prevent the ulcer from coming back by controlling the swelling
- You will need new stockings every 3 to 6 months, as they wear out
- Read the label: Be sure to follow directions for washing and replacing stockings