



The Dudley Group
NHS Foundation Trust

Understanding compression bandages

Leg Ulcer Management Team
Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

Your leg ulcer clinic coordinator, nurse or healthcare professional has recommended that you have compression bandages on your leg(s) to treat a venous leg ulcer. This leaflet gives you more information about what compression bandages are for, how they are applied and some commonly-asked questions about them.

You should also receive a leaflet called 'What is a venous leg ulcer?'. If not, please ask the healthcare professional who is providing your treatment.

Why do I need compression bandages?

Your nurse/health professional has prescribed compression bandages for you to help the problems you have due to damaged veins and leg ulcers. These special bandages apply enough pressure to help the veins do their job better. This should help your ulcer to heal.

There are different types of bandages and your healthcare professional will prescribe the one most suitable for you. The bandages can be elastic or made of cotton. They are applied over a layer of padding which cushions your leg.

Your healthcare professional will be able to tell you more about the particular bandages that have been chosen for you. It is very important that you understand why the bandages are applied in the way they are, and how you can help.

What are benefits?

Research has shown that compression bandages are more effective at healing ulcers than dressings alone. The compression bandages should reduce swelling in your leg(s), and help your ulcers or skin problems to heal.

How are the bandages applied?

The bandages will be applied from the base of your toes to just below your knee.

- This prevents your foot and the top of your calf from swelling.

The bandages should feel firm but not tight, and allow your ankle and foot to move freely.

- The bandages need to feel firm especially around your ankle to heal the ulcer.

The bandages are applied evenly all the way up to the knee.

- This even application will give more support around your ankle than at the knee due to the fact that your ankle is smaller. This is necessary to support the veins returning blood to your heart.

You should be able to wear a shoe over the bandages and you must walk as much as possible.

- It is important to wear a good-fitting shoe to avoid pushing the bandages out of place on your foot.
- The healthcare professional providing your treatment may be able to offer advice on footwear. For example, trainers may give good support but some slippers are poor.
- Walking with your bandages on will help the treatment.
- Exercise is also important to help your ulcer heal. The healthcare professional treating you should give you the leaflet 'Exercises to improve ulcer healing and prevent them coming back'. If not, please ask for a copy.

Questions commonly asked about compression bandages

How long will my ulcer take to heal when I have bandages?

This varies. Some patients heal within a couple of months but others take much longer. If you are worried about your progress, discuss this with the healthcare professional providing your treatment.

Why are these bandages different to others I have used in the past?

Some bandages, such as crepe bandages, cannot apply the correct pressure needed to help your problems. It is important to use the bandages recommended by your healthcare professional.

Can I remove the bandages if I want to?

Your bandages must be worn all the time you are up and about. When the bandages are removed, it only takes a very short time for the pressure in the veins to build up again. This may result in your leg swelling which will affect your ulcer healing.

Your healthcare professional will give you information on washing your leg and showering.

What if the bandages are causing pain?

If the bandages cause pain and discomfort, contact the healthcare professional providing your treatment as soon as possible. If you cannot get hold of them to discuss your problem, you may need to remove your bandages. However, try to speak to them as soon as you can.

Will it help if I raise my legs up when I am sitting?

Yes but your leg and foot need to be raised higher than your hips.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following website:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Leg-ulcer-venous/Pages/Treatment.aspx>

Leg Ulcer Management Team contact details

01384 321425 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Leg Ulcer Management Team
Brierley Hill Health and Social Care Centre
Venture Way
Brierley Hill
DY5 1RU

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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