



The Dudley Group  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Understanding compression stockings (hosiery)

**Leg Ulcer Management Team**  
Patient Information Leaflet

## **Introduction**

Your leg ulcer clinic coordinator, nurse or health professional has recommended that you have compression stockings to treat a venous leg ulcer. This leaflet gives you more information about what compression stockings are for, how you are measured for them and commonly-asked questions about them.

You should also receive the leaflets 'Venous disorders of the lower leg explained' and 'What is a venous leg ulcer?'. If not, please ask the healthcare professional who is providing your treatment.

## **What are compression stockings?**

Your nurse/health professional has prescribed compression stockings for you to help the problems you have due to damaged veins and leg ulcers. The stockings apply pressure to your leg to help your veins carry blood back to your heart.

Before prescribing compression stockings, your healthcare professional will assess you to make sure this is the right treatment. This assessment should have included checking your blood flow using a Doppler ultrasound scan. Please ask the healthcare professional providing your care if you are not sure if you have had this assessment.

## **What are the benefits?**

Research has shown that compression helps reduce swelling in your leg(s), by helping your veins carry blood back to your heart.

## **How will I be measured for the stockings?**

There are a number of different manufacturers of compression stockings. We will select one based on what fits your requirements best. The stockings most frequently used go just up to the knee. Occasionally, full leg stockings may be needed or preferred by you.

It is important that the right size is chosen. The person prescribing or providing your treatment will measure your leg. To do this they will take:

- Below the knee stockings – ankle and calf measurements
- Full leg stockings – ankle, calf and thigh measurements

Occasionally, the size of the leg does not fall into the standard sizing categories. In this case, we may need to take extra measurements so that made-to-measure stockings can be prescribed.

Standard sizes can be supplied within a few days. Supplies of made-to-measure stockings will take longer. You may be treated with compression bandages until the stockings are available.

Compression stockings are available in different strengths, for example, Class I, II and III and in two layer hosiery kits. Your healthcare professional will discuss the strength you need with you. The stockings are sometimes available in different colours and styles such as open or closed toe, stockings or ribbed socks, knee or full leg length.

## **What if I have problems?**

If you experience any pins and needles in your feet, numbness, discolouration, reaction to the stockings, shortness of breath or increased pain in your legs, remove the stockings and inform your nurse or GP as soon as possible.

If you have any other problems, ask your GP for advice.

## **What are the alternatives?**

Compression stockings are not a cure and need to be worn in the long-term to be effective. The alternative treatments available to you will depend on the condition you are being treated for. Your doctor will discuss your options with you, and you can refer to our other leaflets for more information about these.

## Questions commonly asked about compression hosiery

### Do I need to wear my stockings all the time?

Your legs will swell when you are out of bed. The stockings will help to prevent this. If you have problems with your legs swelling, you must ask for advice from your GP or healthcare professional.

### Can I remove the stockings if I want to?

If you are able to take off your stockings, you can do so, for example if you want to have a shower. If your stockings are for treatment of an ulcer, the person providing your treatment will give you advice about this.

You can also take off your stockings while you are in bed but make sure you put them back on in the morning before you get up.

### What if I cannot take my stockings off?

It is safe to sleep in your stockings as long as it is comfortable. Your healthcare professional will give you advice about this.

### What if I cannot get my stockings on?

It may be possible for the person prescribing your treatment to provide you with a compression stocking aid to help you to put on your stockings. Please ask your healthcare professional for advice about this.

### How often should I replace my stockings?

It is important that your stockings continue to give you the right support. This means you will need new stockings every three to six months, depending on the manufacturer.

### Will I need to have my leg measured again?

If the size of your legs changes, it is important that you are measured again. If your leg is thinner, the stockings may not work. If your leg becomes bigger and the stockings become too tight, they can cause skin damage.

## 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](mailto: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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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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