



The Dudley Group  
NHS Foundation Trust

# How can I help my leg ulcer to heal?

**Leg Ulcer Management Team**  
Patient Information Leaflet

## Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have a venous leg ulcer. It gives you information about what you can do to help your leg ulcer heal.

You will be given a lot of information about wearing compression bandages and doing exercises. Your nurse/healthcare professional will have discussed options with you as it is important that you are involved in decisions that affect you.

There are a lot of things you can do to help your ulcer heal and make you feel better while this is happening.

## Wear your compression bandages or stockings

You have a problem with the circulation of blood in your veins. When the blood flow slows down, it can cause your ankles to swell.

Wearing bandages or stockings keeps the blood moving efficiently and helps to reduce the swelling in your ankles. This is why you are asked to wear them all the time.

## Do your exercises

Put your hand on the back of your calf and move your foot up and down. You will feel that muscle move and it is this movement that helps to keep the blood flowing in your legs. This happens when you walk but some people are not able to do this, and most people need to do a little more exercise.

The exercises are simple. You move your feet up and down and rotate your ankle. It is good to do this a few times every hour especially if you have been sitting down for a while.

You may have been given a leaflet explaining exercise in more detail. If not, ask your nurse or the person prescribing your care for a copy.

## Put your feet up

Your ankles swell because of the slow blood flow. You will find that your ankles are less swollen when you have been in bed and it gets worse when you are sitting or standing. If you put your feet up so that they are higher than your hips, the swelling should be reduced.

Some people put their feet on the arm of the sofa when they are sitting down. Alternatively, you could put a cushion on a coffee table or footstool to rest your feet on. It does not matter as long as your feet are higher than your hips.

If you have stiffness in your hips, it may be uncomfortable to sit with your feet up. It may be better to lie on the bed with a couple of pillows or cushions under your ankles.

It is helpful to get into a routine for your rest time, perhaps when there is something you enjoy on the radio or television. It is best to have your feet up at least three times a day. When you do not have your feet up, remember to do your exercises. It is important to do both.

## **Eat a healthy diet**

As your ulcer heals, it uses a lot of goodness from the food you eat. It is important that your diet contains protein, vitamins and minerals. These are found in a varied diet of meat, fish, eggs and cheese, as well as fruit and vegetables. Please ask your nurse for information on healthy eating.

It is important to watch your weight. If you are overweight, you are putting an extra load on the veins in your legs.

## **Drink plenty**

It is important to drink plenty of fluid during the day, unless you have been told not to by the doctor. This helps your ulcer to heal and helps to keep your skin healthy. Do not worry that this will add to the swelling in your ankles as the fluid there is different.

Water is the best drink. You can have other drinks but be careful not to have too many caffeine drinks or those high in sugar.

## Skin care

The skin on your leg is very delicate. You may already apply cream to your face and you need to look after your legs just as carefully. If you are wearing compression bandages, your nurse will advise you on skincare.

You should only use very gentle products on your skin. Avoid using anything with lanolin (wool fat) or perfume. Some baby products contain these.

## Keep in touch

When you have an ulcer, you will see your nurse often. When the ulcer has healed, it is still a good idea to see the nurse from time to time.

If you are worried about your legs, it is important to tell the nurse as soon as possible. You may get problems such as a sore spot, itching or swelling. It is easier to sort problems out if they are found early.

## Do other things

You may feel uncomfortable and as though your ulcer is taking over your life. Try to do other things that you enjoy and discuss your worries with your nurse.

It is important to get the ulcer healed as quickly as possible and to deal with any pain, discomfort or practical difficulties along the way. This is much easier to do if you and your nurse work together.

## 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://dgft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

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

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