

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE SUPPORT SERVICES

North East

HELPING YOU HEAL



Your Guide to Wound Care

VENOUS LEG ULCERS

You have a venous leg ulcer, which is caused by a wound that cannot heal properly because of poor circulation in the lower legs.

Veins move blood from the feet and lower legs “uphill” to the heart. If your circulation is impaired for any reason, pooling of blood around the lower part of the leg to just below the ankle may occur. This pooling can cause swelling, thickening and damage to the skin, as well as difficulty in healing in a normal way if a wound, even a bump or bruise, occurs.

Please review the following reasons why you may develop an ulcer:

- Family history of venous disease
- Impaired circulation
- Reflux of blood through the venous valves (valves in your veins that keep blood flowing in one direction)
- Deep vein thrombosis – may cause blockages in the veins
- Obesity
- Impaired pumping of the calf muscle due to decreasing lower leg movements – sedentary lifestyle, prolonged standing, reduced mobility
- Multiple Pregnancies – causes pressure on the veins in the lower legs
- Leg trauma causing damage to walls of valves in the veins

MANAGING YOUR ULCER

Knowing what caused your venous ulcer will help you manage your wound and prevent future venous ulcers. In order to be YOUR healthiest, you should:



1. **Exercise daily.** Walking strengthens and exercises your calf muscles, causing an increase in the pumping of blood in your legs. Your nurse may put you on a graduated walking program.



2. **Check your feet and legs daily for signs of ulcers.** Wear compression stockings. Keep skin on the legs clean and moisturized. Avoid extremes in temperature.



3. **Keep your legs up** higher than your heart (example put your feet up on pillows when lying in bed or on the couch) for at least 20 minutes three times a day (morning, afternoon and evening to help swelling down. Don't cross legs when sitting.



4. **Protect your legs from bumps or scrapes** by padding sharp corners on furniture, and not engaging in activities that could cause injury to legs.



5. **Eat a balanced diet**, high in protein, which keeps your skin strong and helps wounds heal.



6. **If you smoke, QUIT!** It's bad for blood flow, your skin, and your body. Your team will talk to you about options that will help you kick the habit! It's truly one of the best things you can do for your body at any age.



7. **Compression**, wraps and garments are necessary for venous leg ulcer healing. Advanced dressings are likely not enough on their own. This helps bring blood from your legs back to your heart to bring down swelling that keeps your wound open. Compression garments will need to be worn daily even after wounds are closed (healed) to prevent swelling and occurrence of new wounds.