

Haematology Department

Compression Stockings Information

Information for Patients

Your legs need the support of elastic stockings following an episode of a Deep Vein Thrombosis. This leaflet will help you to understand why it is important to wear your compression stockings.

If you require an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version please ask for assistance.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Blood Circulation

Oxygen is taken from the air we breathe and is carried to all parts of the body by blood. The heart is the pump which keeps the blood moving out along the arteries. On the way back to the heart through the veins the blood needs extra power especially if someone is standing upright. Much of this extra power comes from the leg muscles which contract and squeeze the blood along the veins with every movement.

When you are lying down very little extra power is necessary because the blood does not have to go uphill and the movements we make in our sleep are enough to keep the blood flowing. Valves in the veins stop the blood flowing backwards when the muscles relax. These valves are especially important in the legs because the blood has to be lifted all the way from the toes to the heart.

If the valves are damaged or weakened the veins can become over-stretched and develop into varicose veins. If the valves are severely damaged by a blood clot or injury and the condition is neglected, leg ulcers might result.

Useful Website:

Macmillan Cancer Support
0808 808 00 00
www.macmillan.org.uk

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
Cancer Education, Information and Support Service

Telephone: 01296 316954

Email:

cancerinformation@buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

People who wear support stockings benefit greatly from exercise. Try brisk walking each day, two to three miles if possible. Avoid standing for long periods if you can.

If you have to stand for any length of time exercise on the spot by moving your toes inside your shoes, marking time or going up and down on tiptoe.

When sitting, especially on long journeys, exercise the toes and ankles by bending and stretching movements.

When resting, always try to raise the legs to help the blood flow.

Remember

- Wear your stockings every day to help your circulation.
- If your stockings are uncomfortable, or do not fit properly please inform your Nurse or GP.
- Wash the stockings as recommended.
- Never fold your stocking over at the top.
- Try to take regular exercise such as a brisk walk each day.

Compression stockings

Wearing compression stockings at all times when you are on your feet helps to correct the underlying problem of poor venous blood return and also reduces leg pain and swelling.



Ordinary support tights and stockings sold in department stores may be useful for someone who just has aching legs but are not suitable for anyone with a thrombosis or varicose veins.

There are different types or classes of elastic compression stockings.

The ones we issue to you are class II, these are knee length and open-toed. They will give sufficient pressure to aid the circulation of blood following a deep vein thrombosis. Below knee stockings are easier to handle and you need only to wear one on the affected leg during the day and off at night.

To give you the appropriate size of stocking your leg will be measured at the calf and ankle and the correct size issued. Stockings will be issued if you have continued pain and swelling in your leg following a DVT.

The stockings we issue are effective for up to about six months. However, as two are issued, use one for the first six months then the other for the next and review in one year. We suggest you obtain a renewal prescription from your GP to replace them. A charge for the stockings will be made unless you are exempt from prescription charges. (Renewal forms FP10 or GP10).

Application of the stockings

Illustrated instructions with your stockings are well worth studying to help with application. To aid application the stocking should be turned inside out as far as the heel. Insert the thumbs into the sides of the foot and slip on the stocking until the heel is correctly placed then gather up the fabric, ease it over the ankle and up the leg, keeping the thumbs inside and spreading the fabric as evenly as possible until you reach the knee. Creases and unevenness should be gently smoothed away with the palm of the hand. If a stocking has been pulled up too high the unwanted length should never be folded over as this would produce an uncomfortable tight band at the top. Take the stocking all the way back to the ankle and re-apply it more sparingly.

Suggested tips for application:

- wearing of fine rubber gloves will protect the stocking from your fingernails and make handling easier.
- sprinkle the leg with talcum powder.
- use lower part of a nylon stocking over the bare leg will help you slip the stockings on more easily.
- a plastic bag cut diagonally worn over the foot whilst applying the stocking can be removed through the open toe.

Advice notes:

It is important to take off your stockings at night and put on again first thing in the morning when you get up to prevent the leg swelling.

Frequent washing, following the manufacturers instructions will lengthen the stockings life and maintain its effectiveness. The leg can be moisturised regularly to keep the skin supple preventing dryness and aid circulation.