

# Care for Venous Insufficiency Disease/Ulcers

## Venous Insufficiency Disease

When the valves in your leg veins are damaged, blood begins to pool. As a result, your veins have trouble carrying blood from your legs back to your heart.

In time, this causes chronic (long-lasting) venous insufficiency. You may have pain or swelling in your legs. If the swelling is not controlled, an ulcer (sore) may form.

Care for your legs can help control your symptoms, reduce swelling, and reduce your risk of developing ulcers.

## Help Your Damaged Leg Veins

- Walk to help your leg muscles pump blood back to your heart.
- Avoid standing and sitting for long periods of time.
- If you are overweight, talk with your doctor about losing weight.
- Raise your feet above your heart level for 30 minutes at a time, three times a day, and when you sleep. You may want to put blocks under the foot of your bed or large pillows under your mattress.
- Raise your legs after you exercise. This helps keep the increased blood flow from pooling in your legs.
- Do the following foot exercises every 30 minutes to keep blood moving when you sit. To do these exercises, sit in a comfortable chair. Use correct posture.

Do each set of exercises five times with one leg. Switch legs and repeat for 5 times.

- **Ankle rolls.** Keep your heels on the floor. Lift your toes off the floor up and down (like tapping) and then in and out.
- **Forward foot slide.** Keep your foot on the floor. Slide your foot forward and back on the floor.
- **Knee straightening.** Put your feet on the floor. Kick your feet straight up. Straighten your knees and hold for five seconds. Put your feet down back to your starting position.
- **Knee lift.** Keep your feet on the floor. With your knee bent, lift your foot and leg up and down.

## Support Your Legs

- Wear therapeutic support stockings that apply pressure from your ankles up through your calves. Your doctor can recommend the correct stockings for you. (TED<sup>®</sup>-type stockings are not effective).
- Always put on your support stockings **before you get out of bed** to prevent the fluid from pooling in your legs.
- Wear support stockings all day and then remove them at bedtime.

*(over)*

- Wash the stockings by handwashing them in a mild detergent. Follow the directions on the stocking package.
  - Hang the stockings to dry — do not put them in the dryer.
  - Hang the stockings where you can reach them to put them on before you get out of bed in the morning.
- If you develop ulcers (sores), call your doctor as soon as possible.
- Buy new stockings every 6 months or so to maintain their strength and compression.
- Avoid ACE® bandages. It is difficult to wrap them properly to provide the compression your legs need.

## Care for Your Skin

- Be careful to avoid activities that can cause injury to your feet and legs. An accident can cause an ulcer that may take months to heal.
- **If an ulcer (sore) forms on your leg, visit your doctor as soon as possible.** Your doctor or nurse may apply a special dressing to help the ulcer heal and protect it from infection. You may also receive antibiotics (medicine) to fight an infection.
- Don't let the skin on your legs dry out. If the skin gets too dry, it can more easily crack or get sores.
- Use only mild soap and water to wash your legs and feet. Harsh soaps and chemicals can remove the protection that your skin provides naturally.
- Use moisturizing creams and lotions after bathing or washing. Avoid lotions with perfumes and be careful not to get lotion between your toes.