

# Care for Venous Insufficiency Disease

## 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 aches or swelling in your legs. If the swelling is not controlled, an ulcer (sore) may form.

Special care of your legs can help control your symptoms, reduce swelling and reduce your risk of developing ulcers.

## Action Steps to 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 health care provider about losing weight.
- Do not cross your legs for long periods of time. Instead, cross your legs at the ankles.
- Raise your feet above your heart level for 30 minutes at a time, three times a day, and when you sleep. Check with your health care provider about the best sleeping position for you.
- If you are sitting for long periods of time, wiggle your toes and move your ankles up and down for 5 minutes, every 30 minutes. Get up and walk if possible.

- Do the following foot exercises several times a day 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 five 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. Position your feet straight up. Straighten your knees and hold for 5 seconds. Put your feet down back to your starting position.
  - Knee lift.** Place your feet on the floor. With your knee bent, lift one foot and leg up and down, then alternate legs.

## Support Your Legs

- Wear therapeutic compression stockings that apply pressure from your ankles up through your calves. Your health care provider can recommend the correct compression stockings for you. (TED<sup>®</sup>-type stockings may not work well.)
- Avoid ACE<sup>®</sup> bandages unless your health care provider has given you other instructions. It is difficult to wrap them properly to provide the compression your legs need.

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- Always put on your compression stockings before you get out of bed.
- Wear compression stockings all day and then remove them at bedtime.
- You may find compression stockings difficult to put on and you may need help.
- Wash the stockings by hand in cool water and a mild detergent. Follow the directions on the stocking package. Hang the stockings to dry — do not put them in the dryer.
- Buy new compression stockings at least every 6 months to maintain their strength and compression.
- If you develop ulcers (sores), call your health care provider as soon as possible.

## Care for Your Feet

- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, sores, cracks and swelling. Use a mirror to check the bottoms of your feet or ask a family member for help if you have trouble seeing.
- Call your health care provider right away if a cut, sore, blister or bruise does not heal after several days.** Your health care provider 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.

- Wash your feet with mild soap and slightly warm water every day. Do not soak your feet because they may dry out.
- Dry your feet well. Be sure to dry between the toes.
- Use a thin coat of lotion and cream for dry skin, but not between your toes. Avoid lotions with perfumes.
- Use a pumice stone to smooth corns and calluses.
- Cut your toenails straight across and file the edges with an emery board or nail file.
- Wear shoes and socks at all times:
  - Never walk barefoot.
  - Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and protect your feet.
  - Wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement.
  - Wear socks at night if your feet get cold.
- Always check inside your shoes for worn areas or things that might cause sores on your feet. Ask your health care provider about special shoes.
- Don't cross your legs for long periods of time. Instead, cross your legs at the ankles.
- Wiggle your toes and move your ankles up and down for 5 minutes, two or three times each day.