

Department of Haematology

Patient Information

Compression stockings for treatment of a Deep Vein Thrombosis

This information is for patients who have been advised to wear compression stockings following a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). It explains why you need the stockings and how to wear them. It also tells you how to look for signs of problems.

What are compression stockings?

Compression stockings are also called graduated compression stockings. They are different to anti-embolism stockings that sometimes need to be worn after an operation. You should wear them every day for at least two years after being diagnosed with a DVT. The stocking aims to prevent Post Thrombotic Syndrome. Symptoms might include permanent pain, swelling and discolouration in your calf.

What size stockings should I wear?

Immediately following your diagnosis of DVT you will be assessed by the DVT Nurse or ward staff and fitted with an anti-embolism stocking. This stocking has a lower pressure and is temporary until the pain and swelling have gone down. When this has happened after a few weeks you will need to see your GP or DVT Nurse Specialist. He / she will measure your legs to see what size stockings you need. The stockings are then provided on prescription from your GP. You should have two stockings so you can wash one while wearing the other. Your legs should be measured again each six months and your stockings replaced to keep them effective.

When should I wear the stockings?

Wear your compression stockings during the day and then take them off before you go to bed. Put them on again first thing in the morning. They may be removed if you are going swimming. They are meant to be firm when on as they need to provide a set amount of pressure to your veins. This will increase the blood flow and relieve pain, discomfort and swelling in your legs.

How do I put them on?

Insert your hand into the stockings as far as the heel pocket. Turn stocking inside out leaving the foot area the right way. Place the foot area over your foot and pull up to your heel, ensuring the heel pocket is correctly aligned over your heel. Pull the stocking up over your ankle, and then smooth out over your calf. You may need someone to help you to put them on. There are also aids available from the Pharmacy.

When wearing stockings be aware of the following:

- They must fit properly – do not turn the tops down as this may restrict your circulation. Ensure there is no bunching up of the stocking.
- When sitting, ensure your stockings are not restricting the circulation at the knee.

What problems should I look for?

You will need to check your toes and foot daily for sensation, circulation and movement. Stop wearing the stocking and report immediately to your GP / anticoagulation clinic, if you have:

- discoloured toes (blue/white)
- toes become cold, painful or uncomfortable
- tingling / pins and needles in your toes
- swelling to your toes
- changes to the skin such as redness, a rash or itching.

Any questions?

If you have any questions or worries, please ask a member of staff in the anticoagulation clinic or the DVT Nurse Specialist.

Further information

You might also find it useful to visit www.nhs.uk (type compression stockings into the search bar).

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