

# Venous ulcers: Self-management at home



GLOUCESTERSHIRE LEG ULCER SERVICE

## Important notice

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a coronavirus.

### Stay at home if you have coronavirus symptoms.

Stay at home if you have either:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature).
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).

### Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.

Visit **NHS 111 online** coronavirus service (<https://111.nhs.uk/>) to find out what to do.

### Only call NHS 111 if you cannot get help online.

Unfortunately, the spread of the virus has meant that, in line with instructions from the UK government and the World Health Organisation, we have had to change the way we provide our service for patients with leg ulcers.

Contact your GP's surgery if you need medical help.

Continue to attend appointments at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, Cheltenham General Hospital and Stroud Maternity Hospital unless you are contacted directly to advise otherwise.

**Do not** attend for appointments if you have symptoms that require you to self-isolate.

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Department

**Leg Ulcer  
Service**

Review due

**March 2023**

## Patient Information

If you are unable to attend an appointment due to self-isolation, you should contact the hospital through the usual routes for advice. If you have **not** been contacted directly by the leg ulcer team to make any other arrangements at this point, you should plan to attend as normal.

### **The reason for this leaflet**

In order to slow the spread of the coronavirus, all non-essential and routine follow-up appointments in the Leg Ulcer Clinics have been cancelled. Your care will need to be managed at home for the time being. In most cases, this will just mean that you continue to receive your leg ulcer management from your community nurse or practice nurse.

However, it is now expected that your GP will restrict all visits to the surgery in a continued attempt to fight the virus. This may mean that you will be unable to receive regular dressings from your practice nurse in the surgery.

One of the most important things in leg ulcer management is consistency. This means that your treatment must be maintained regularly. Even in these challenging times, it is vital that the management of your leg ulcer is not compromised in any way that may lead to a delay in healing.

Your leg ulcer nurse specialist will have informed you that the evidence-based management of your venous leg ulcer is compression therapy. This is normally provided using a system of bandages.

However, these require at least weekly dressing changes which may be challenging for your community nurses who will have their hands full for obvious reasons. You have therefore been advised to use an alternative compression system that you can manage yourself with less dependency on the community teams.

The alternative systems include:

- 2 layer hosiery kits
- Velcro-based adjustable compression systems

These can be worn over a suitable dressing which can be changed as necessary by yourself and allow you to retain some control. Further information and your individualised care plan are included in the following sections.

**Patient  
Information**

## Your Care Plan

### Arterial assessment

ABPI \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date of reassessment \_\_\_\_\_

### Limb assessment

Ankle circumference \_\_\_\_\_

Calf circumference \_\_\_\_\_

## Management - Hosiery Kit

Compression hosiery kits can be an alternative to bandages for healing leg ulcers. A hosiery kit consists of a liner and a below knee, open toed compression stocking. These are worn one on top of the other and provide high compression. The combined compression allows leg ulcer healing without the bulk of bandages. This also allows you to change the dressing yourself as needed.

The stockings should be worn 24 hours a day and should remain firm but comfortable.

It is possible that the hosiery kit may get tighter towards the end of the day. This normally happens if your leg swells. Information on what you can do to help prevent this from happening are included in the 'What can I do to help my ulcers' section.

## Management - Adjustable Compression System

An alternative to compression bandages and hosiery is the use of adjustable compression systems, commonly known as adjustable Velcro® wrap devices. These devices provide graduated compression to the lower limb.

**Patient  
Information**

Compression wraps are ideal for use where access to healthcare professionals who are competent in compression bandaging is limited, such as residential homes, nursing homes and GP practices, or where patients wish to care for themselves.

Your leg ulcer specialist nurse will measure you for a Velcro® wrap if this is thought to be the best option for you. The nurse will demonstrate how to apply and remove the Velcro® wrap then check that you are happy to continue with these techniques at home.

The wrap should be worn 24 hours a day. You will be able to remove it for showering and redressing of your ulcer. If your wrap becomes tight, this is normally because of your leg swelling. Follow the advice in the section at the end of this leaflet to help prevent this.

Compression wrap: \_\_\_\_\_

Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Colour: \_\_\_\_\_

Order code: \_\_\_\_\_

**For both hosiery kits and compression wraps**

Your leg ulcer specialist nurse has recommended that the following dressing should be applied to your ulcer(s). These can be obtained on a repeat prescription from your GP. Please give the surgery the following information:

Name of dressing: \_\_\_\_\_

Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of dressing: \_\_\_\_\_

Order code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Patient  
Information**

## What can I do to help my ulcers?

A combination of the following is needed:

1. Elevate (raise) your legs for 2 hours 3 times a day, for example lying on the bed or sofa. Try to raise your legs higher than your heart. This will help gravity pull the blood and fluid in the right direction, towards your heart, reducing any swelling.
2. Keep as active as you can to improve your circulation. Do not stand in one position for long periods of time. Exercising your ankle joint is recommended. You can do this by flexing your foot up and down for 5 minutes every hour.
3. Eat healthy, try to include plenty of proteins such as fish, and eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables in your diet. Some ulcers may need additional vitamins and minerals to help them heal. Try to maintain your ideal weight, as being overweight puts extra strain on your veins.
4. Take care of your feet – look out for any new changes in skin colour or new ulcers on your feet. Your toe nails should be cut on a regular basis.
5. Take care not to knock your legs, as many ulcers start following an injury.
6. Be aware of your skin temperature – too much heat can damage your skin. Avoid hot baths, hot water bottles or sitting too close to the fire. Wear thick socks or slippers instead.

### Gloucestershire Leg Ulcer Service

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