Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

My Lower Limb Passport

Name
NHS Number
GP Surgery and telephone number
District Nurse and telephone number
Leg Ulcer Clinic and telephone number



compassionate care

Guide to lower limb ulceration and assessment

Leg ulcers can occur at any age. At least 1% of the population over 65 years may develop a leg ulcer, 70% of these are venous leg ulcers.

In a healthy leg the veins transport blood from the legs, up towards the heart.

The calf muscle pump is the muscle used for walking and exercise—this contracts and relaxes. The valves inside the veins stop the blood flowing back down the leg.

These valves can become damaged after deep vein thrombosis, pregnancy, standing for long periods or carrying too much weight. This results in increased pressure of blood in the veins in the leg, which can result in blood leaking out of the veins and into surrounding tissues. This causes swelling, thickening and damage to the skin, which can eventually result in ulceration.



Ulceration

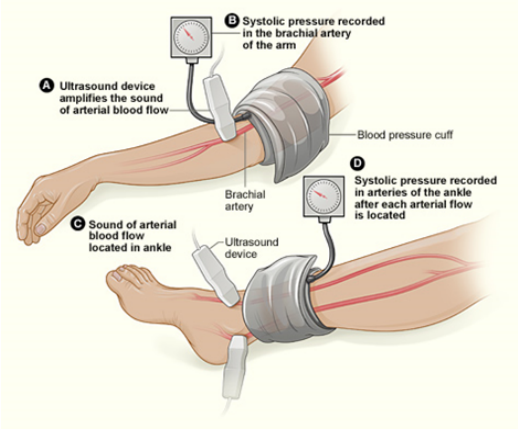
Ulcers can occur spontaneously or as a result of injury to the leg, and develop when an area of skin breaks down to reveal the underlying flesh. Venous leg ulcers are the most common type of skin ulcer and usually occur just above the ankle. Without appropriate treatment, an ulcer may become larger and cause other problems such as pain or infection.



Non venous ulcers are less common and may be caused by poor circulation due to narrowed arteries, problems with nerves to the skin, and other health conditions. The treatment for non venous ulcers is different to that of venous ulcers.

Assessment

A full lower limb assessment, including Doppler assessment, helps the clinician to rule out poor circulation as a cause of ulceration. This involves checking the blood pressure in the ankle and the arm to provide a blood pressure ratio called the Ankle Brachial Pressure Index (ABPI). If no abnormalities in the circulation are identified, appropriate treatment can be commenced and the test will be repeated every 6-12 months.



Treatment

The treatment aim is to help blood flow towards the heart again. To achieve this, the damaged valve and calf muscle needs support and this is done by wearing support hosiery or compression bandages. The compression treatment will help to prevent the backflow of blood and also help to reduce any swelling, pain, itchy skin, and help to heal the ulcer.



This is the most important part of your treatment plan. Dressings may be used beneath the bandaging to cover your wound, but will not heal the ulcer without the appropriate level of compression.

Elevation and Activity

Whenever you are resting, if possible try to keep your leg raised higher than your hip—this is especially important if you have swelling in your leg. The aim of leg elevation is to try and allow gravity to pull fluid and blood in the right direction—towards the heart. This helps to reduce the pressure of blood in the leg veins. Aim to do this as often as possible. For the rest of the time, try to keep as active as possible and continue usual activities. Regular walks may help but avoid standing still for long periods.

Overnight whilst sleeping, try to raise the elevation of your legs by placing some pillows beneath the bedsheets at the foot end of your bed.

Managing your ulcer

Knowing what caused your venous leg ulcer will help you manage your wound and prevent future venous leg ulcers. In order to be your healthiest you should consider the following:

1. Exercise daily. Walking strengthens and exercises your calf muscles which helps pump the blood around your legs. If you have mobility problems, the nurse will show you foot and leg exercises that you can perform at rest.
2. When seated, rest your legs higher than your heart as often as possible, allowing for regular periods of exercise. Avoid crossing your legs when sitting.
3. Check your feet and legs daily for signs of ulcers. Wear compression stockings. Ensure the skin on your legs is kept clean and moisturised. Avoid extremes in temperature (i.e. sitting too close to gas fires).
4. Protect your legs from bumps and scrapes by padding sharp corners on furniture, and avoiding activities which may result in injury.
5. Wash the skin on your legs regularly and apply prescribed moisturiser to maintain a healthy skin condition.
6. Eat a balanced diet, high in protein and vitamins, which keeps your skin strong and helps wounds to heal.
7. If you smoke—aim to QUIT. It is bad for your blood flow, your skin, and your body. Your nurse or doctor will talk to you about options that will help you to kick the habit and provide written information about support services available.
8. Compression wraps and garments are necessary for venous leg ulcer healing. These need to be worn daily even after wounds have healed, to prevent swelling and recurrence of wounds.



Responding to any changes or concerns.

Your wound will change throughout the healing process. If you experience any of the following changes it is important that you contact your nurse or seek medical advice:

- Increase in redness, pain, swelling, or bleeding
- Increase in size or depth of the wound
- Change in wound appearance such as darker colour
- Increase in leakage from the wound
- Change in colour and consistency of leakage, such as thick, green, or yellow leakage.
- Your temperature is above 37.8 degrees for more than 2 hours
- Changes in colour to the lower leg, or experiencing pain, numbness or tingling after applying compression treatment.
- If your bandage slips, starts to feel uncomfortable, or becomes wet / soiled it will need changing. Some discomfort may be experienced initially when starting compression treatment and simple analgesia may be required. Your comfort level should improve once the treatment regime is established.

Preventing Recurrence.

It is common for venous leg ulcers to recur after they have healed. To reduce the risk of this happening, you may be prescribed compression stockings to wear during the daytime for at least 5 years after your wound has healed. This helps to counteract the raised pressures that can cause venous leg ulcers. Your stockings should be replaced every 6 months as the elasticity reduces after a while and they become ineffective. Compression stockings prescribed for medical purposes are different to support tights or stockings that can be bought in shops. Regular review appointments will be arranged for you to attend lower limb clinics for reassessment and provision of compression garments.

A leg ulcer is much less likely to recur if you wear compression stockings regularly.

Sometimes surgery for varicose veins is advised after an ulcer has healed, in order to prevent recurrence.

Follow up advice.

Based on your lower limb assessment, the following advice may have been provided:

⇒ Quit smoking advice / written information

⇒ Healthy weight management advice / written information or referral to appropriate services.

⇒ To arrange a follow up with your GP for _____

_____

⇒ Referral to other services: _____

_____

⇒ Self care advice: _____

_____

⇒ Prescribed treatment plan: _____

_____

⇒ Follow up arrangement and date of next appointment: _____

_____

⇒ Additonal Notes _____

_____

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If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Clinical Managers
Lister Lane
Unit 1 Victoria Lodge
30 Lister Lane
Halifax
HX1 5AX
Tel: 01422 361374

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

ਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ طرزبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"