Did you know?

Modern compression hosiery uses lightweight, comfortable yarns virtually indistinguishable from regular hosiery.

Compression stockings

Compression stockings come in a variety of sizes, lengths and colours and scientifically designed to provide the strongest pressure around your ankle, with decreasing pressure as the stocking goes up the leg to improve and regulate the flow of blood in the legs and back to the heart. Your legs will be measured by a qualified practitioner to see what size stockings you need and check to ensure they fit properly. Compression hosiery is available in below knee and thigh length varieties and some people prefer open toe hosiery

Compression look and feels like regular men's socks or women's hosiery, but from the minute you put them on, you will experience the difference reducing the aching and throbbing sensations from inactive legs.

Tips:

- Be sure to wear the stockings as prescribed
- Put them on as soon as possible in the morning, wearing them until bedtime
- Make sure your skin is dry, especially after applying lotion as moisture makes it harder to pull stockings on
- Once the stocking is on, check that that there's no bunching or wrinkling, especially at the ankles
- Don't fold the top of the stocking down
- Avoid prolonged standing or sitting
- Control risk factors (e.g. obesity, smoking)

Remember, use of compression hosiery when early signs of venous insufficiency are present can help to prevent the development of ulcers in later life!

What should I do next?

Even if you don't have exactly the symptoms described in this leaflet, if you have any concerns about the condition of your legs or feet you should have them professionally assessed. In the first instance, speak to your doctor, nurse, podiatrist, pharmacist or local Leg Club, who will give you a thorough examination. This may include a full health check and review of the circulation in your legs.

Contact **01473 749565**
Email: **lynn.bullock@legclubfoundation.com**

What is a Leg Club?

Leg Clubs are a research-based initiative which provide community-based treatment, health promotion, education and ongoing care for people of all age groups who are experiencing leg-related problems.

The Leg Club nursing teams are employed by NHS local provider services, CCGs and GP consortia and the nurses incorporate the Leg Clubs into their everyday practice.

No appointment is required and the Leg Club opening hours should be available from the local surgery, community nurses' office, and adverts in the local parish magazine and village shops or from the Leg Club website **www.legclub.org**

Through education, ongoing advice and support from your Leg Club nurses, you will be made aware that care and prevention of recurrence of leg-related problems is for life.

Visit your nearest Leg Club

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www.legclub.org

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The Leg Club Foundation is proud to be a member of the Legs Matters coalition **www.legsmatter.org**

Designed by Boothman Design

Healthy Legs for Life!

Prevention is better than cure

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This leaflet has been produced to help make you aware of some of the common leg complaints which, if diagnosed early enough, can be helped or eliminated by the use of compression therapy.

It has been estimated that around 50% of the western population are likely to get some form of venous disease during their lifetime. This can range from spider veins to more serious complaints such as leg ulcers. This is due to the fact that we have evolved to walk upright which means that gravity is constantly forcing blood away from the heart and back into your legs.

If normal bloodflow through the valves within the deep veins in your legs becomes ineffective through injury or inactivity, the blood may be redirected to the superficial veins. These are situated near the surface of the skin, causing various complaints such as varicose veins and leg ulcers. It is this extra pressure in your veins that may lead to problems in later life.

If you are having problems with your legs, you may have noticed that the skin has become discoloured and you may also experience itchiness in the lower part.

Motorcycle riders may be prone to venous disease, mainly due to the riding position (shown below) which can put pressure on the major arteries, restricting blood flow to the lower limbs.

The veins may also start to bulge and become sore. The pain may be worse at the end of the day when you have been standing for long periods.

These problems are usually more common where there is a family history of varicose veins or leg ulcers.

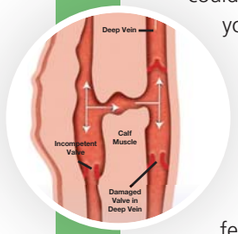
The gold standard for the treatment of venous disease is compression therapy. Compression socks/stockings are ideally suited for long term treatment of disorders of the venous system.

How compression therapy works

Compression hosiery and bandages work by applying a firm, continuous, graduated pressure to the muscles and veins in your legs. When your calf muscle contracts e.g. during walking, your hosiery for example will 'give' and then return to its original position. By doing this, your hosiery is able to assist your body's own natural mechanism for returning the blood back to your heart.

The compression sock/stocking applies the correct amount of pressure at particular points of the leg. The most pressure is placed around the ankle, then decreases gradually towards the thigh.

Flared ankles *Varicose veins* *Spider veins*



What is venous insufficiency

Do your legs feel tired, heavy and the ankles swollen at the end of the day, or are your legs itching? This could be the first sign of venous disease, even before you see anything on your skin.

A family history of venous problems such as varicose veins or being pregnant can add to this and, as a result, the valves in your veins do not work as efficiently as they should.

If your veins get out of shape and your legs feel tired, whether through lack of exercise, long periods of standing or sitting or hereditary disease, this can lead to a reduced function of the calf pump muscle, i.e. the blood flow back to the heart is impaired. The consequence: pressure on the walls in the veins rises and, in turn the veins expand. A further complication can be a deep vein thrombosis, better known as DVT.

Untreated venous insufficiency can lead to the development of venous leg ulcers. This can be avoided in the majority of cases with simply intervention.

For your health and well-being

- Do you have swollen ankles and/or heavy legs at the end of the day?
- Are you pregnant?
- Are you overweight?
- Does your work involve sitting or standing for long periods?
- Does your family have a history of venous problems?
- Do you fly or drive for more than 2 hours regularly?
- Do you have unsightly spider or varicose veins?

If you have ticked one or more of the of the above, then we advise you to get in touch with a Leg Club near you and get some advice on how to look after your legs and prevent any venous problems in the future.

How to examine your own legs

If your veins are not working efficiently you may then experience skin changes and other signs that indicate what is happening under the surface of your skin.

Ticking the boxes below may show that you have problems with the veins in your lower legs. They may not be working as efficiently as they did.

Do you regularly have any of the following symptoms?:

- reddish/brown staining above the ankle sores that appear within the stained skin itchy patches above the ankle
- wounds or knocks that are slow to heal visible and painful varicose veins
- tired, throbbing and/or swollen legs

With all this going on, the skin above the ankle will be very vulnerable. If the above symptoms are not attended to, then the risk of developing leg ulcers is high. The provision of compression hosiery or socks will reduce the risk of the above by helping the blood return up the leg.

What you can do for yourself

Here are some useful exercises to help improve your circulation.

Sitting & lying (flexing the foot)

Sitting & lying (rotating the ankle)

Standing (moving up and down)