

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 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.

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

The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation
Ipswich, PO Box 689, IP1 9BN

Telephone
01473 749565

Email:
lynn.bullock@legclubfoundation.com

www.legclub.org

The skin. Why is it Important?

Skin care made easy



The Leg Club title, wording and logo are protected by registered trademark in the UK. Registered Charity No. 1111259 www.legclub.org
Designed by Boothman Design



The skin

The skin is the largest organ of the body, with a total area of about 2 square metres, a thickness that varies from 0.5mm on eyelids to 4mm or more on the



Fig. 1. Layers of the skin

palms of hands and the soles of feet with more than 11 miles of blood vessels. A person's skin accounts for 16 percent of his or her body weight.

The skin protects our internal organs and acts as a barrier against infection, regulates our body temperature, enables us to detect sensations such as touch, pain, heat, and cold. The skin has a large number of good bacteria on it which is thought to help protect us by balancing our immune system function. Occasionally a bad bacteria will settle on the skin without causing any problem, unless the skin is broken.

Any break in the skin, for any reason, opens the body to invasion of pathogens which could threaten life. Ageing makes the skin thinner through loss of collagen, making it harder to protect and harder to heal any wounds that might occur.

Stay hydrated!

There are several very thin layers to the skin (see fig 1) with the 1st top layer (epidermis) made up of 15% water and the 2nd layer that contains all blood vessels and nerves (dermis) being made up of 70% water.

Therefore, keeping the skin healthy means to ensure fluid intake is sufficient. The minimum intake should be 1700 ml per day. Almost 80% of the total daily fluid comes from fluid intake associated with meals and those who do not get at least 50% of their daily fluid intake from their meals are at high risk for dehydration.

Keeping skin clean & moisturised

Skin needs to be kept supple, smooth and elastic in order to accommodate movement and health. Therefore, protective creams and ointments are invaluable to this process.

Itchy skin can also sometimes be caused by an allergic reaction to dressings or creams and this calls for a test for allergies so that product can be avoided in the future.

Common additives that can cause allergies to creams: Lanolin, Rubber, Perfume, Preservatives (Methylisothiazolinone & Parabens), Vehicle Adhesive. Always use low allergy creams or ointments (which tend not to have preservatives).



Fig. 2. Allergic reaction

When applying cream or ointment to the legs, it should always be in a downward manner. Massaging upward forces the cream/ointment into the hair follicles which can cause folliculitis (Fig. 2).

The elderly may suffer from dry spots on the legs, elbows, and lower arms with dry patches that are rough and scaly and can itch. Possible reasons are eczema, central heating, smoking, ageing skin, dehydration etc.



Fig. 3. Folliculitis

Sun damage

Age spots, known as liver spots are brown spots that are caused by years in the sun. They tend to show in areas that have a lot of sun exposure such as the face, hands, arms, back, and feet.

There are many creams that are sold for removal or reduction of the spots (many of which do not work) and there are treatments with laser, which can be painful.

Bruising

Bruising is far more common in the elderly. Blood thinning medicines (which many elderly people need to take) make bruising even more common. It is wise to be more careful around shopping trolleys and corners of tables etc. as this can cause leg ulceration and healing may be slow.

Moles

Look for changes such as a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a bleeding mole. Check moles, birthmarks, or other parts of the skin for the "ABCDE":

- A Asymmetry** (one half of the growth looks different from the other half).
- B Borders** that are irregular.
- C Colour** changes or more than one colour.
- D Diameter** greater than the size of a pencil eraser.
- E Evolving**; this means the growth changes in size, shape, symptoms (itching, tenderness), surface (especially bleeding), or shades of colour.

It is vital to report immediately to your GP if there are any of these signs.

It is always sensible to visit your local Leg Club if any changes are noted to the skin of your legs.

Contact **01473 749565**

Email: lynn.bullock@legclubfoundation.com