

Venous Stasis & Leg Ulcers

Venous Disorders

Through our arterial system, our blood supplies essential nutrients to our cells, muscles and body organs. Through our veins, our blood contains waste products and is transported through the heart to the “detoxification centers” in our body -- organs that include the liver and the kidneys. We remain healthy only if our circulatory system is functioning adequately, carrying nutrition to where it’s needed and continually purifying our blood stream. During periods of sitting, standing and walking, the blood in our leg veins must flow uphill to the heart. This is easy when we have healthy veins and aid from our calf muscles, which act as miniature pumping stations. With diseased veins, however, it can lead to venous congestion in our legs.

How can Venous Congestion in the legs be avoided?

1. By movement of the calf muscles (walking or moving the feet), the blood in your veins is pumped in the direction of your heart. This function is called the “muscle pump.”
2. By keeping the legs elevated. It is far easier for your body to pump blood downhill than uphill. Elevating your legs eases the task of pumping blood from your legs to your heart.
3. By wearing medical elastic stockings or compression bandages. Note that we said medical elastic stockings for a reason. So-called “support stockings” are generally inadequate support for your legs and veins. The hose should be at least 25mm. The most effective treatment for severe congestion and swelling is an intermittent compression pump, available through a surgical supply store.

Some Special Cases:

During confinement to bed -

In the hospital or in your home, prolonged bed confinement can lead to thrombosis (formation of blood clots in the veins). This is especially true in patients with venous disorders, but also happens frequently to patients with healthy veins.

To help prevent thrombosis (blood clots)

- Keep the foot of your bed raised.
- Move the legs frequently with rotating foot movements. Move the feet back and forth rapidly, “play piano” with your toes, draw up and stretch your legs.
- Air your lungs at regular intervals. Breathe in and out deeply about 10 times, several times a day. This helps oxygenate your blood and keeps it moving freely.
- After thrombosis or pulmonary embolism, patients with very pronounced varicose veins should, on doctor’s advice, wear medical elastic stockings.
- In case of sudden pain in the calf of any unusual swelling, consult with your doctor.

When there is danger of leg ulceration

- Avoid skin injuries.
- Compress critical areas of skin with foam rubber before putting on your medical elastic stockings.
- Consult your doctor for even the smallest open sore on the skin.

Do's & Don'ts for Ulcers

- Do keep active and walk throughout the day.
- Don't sit for long periods with legs hanging down and/or crossed.
- Do keep legs elevated above level of the heart when lying down.
- Don't stand for prolonged periods.
- Do wear a vascular support device as prescribed by a physician (i.e. support stockings, elastic ace wraps).
- Don't use tobacco of any kind.
- Don't wear binding clothing.
- Do control weight, eat a well-balanced diet, and drink plenty of fluid.
- Don't participate in activities that could expose you to hot temperatures such as: direct summer sun (sunburn), heating pads, hot soaks, hot tub baths, hot water bottles
- Don't expose yourself to very cold temperatures in winter that could cause frostbite.
- Do inspect feet and legs daily for cuts, bruises and blisters.
- Do keep feet and legs clean, dry, and well moisturized.
- Don't participate in any activity that could cause injury to your feet or legs such as: wearing shoes that are too tight or small; walking barefoot or with open sandals, shaving (legs), and vigorous massage.
- Do keep toenails trimmed straight across.
- Do use powders to absorb moisture.
- Don't use over-the-counter preparations for corns or calluses.
- Do report to physician: change in color, warmth or feeling, swelling, or presence of any open, draining sores.