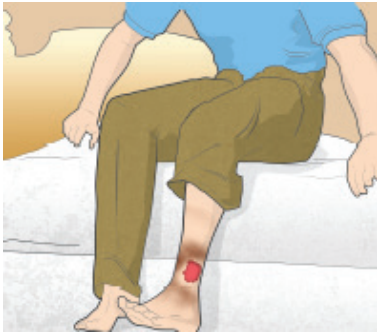


# WHAT IS A VENOUS ULCER?



Arteries carry blood away from your heart to the rest of your body. Veins carry the blood back to your heart. If blood flow slows in your legs, blood will collect in your feet and ankles, causing swelling and stretching. Then, your skin tears from being overstretched because the blood has nowhere to go. This is called a venous, or stasis, ulcer.

## How did you get a venous ulcer?

The most common cause of venous ulcers is the collection of blood in your lower legs, feet and ankles. This happens when valves in your veins do not open and close properly. Without treatment, there will be a gradual change in the color and condition of your skin. A wound or ulcer can develop. Early treatment and following your doctor or nurse's orders is very important.

Risk factors include

- » Repeatedly standing in one place for a long time
- » Not moving
- » Tight clothing
- » Crossing your legs
- » Trauma or injury
- » Being overweight
- » Smoking
- » Direct heat

## What does it mean to you?

A venous ulcer means that you have an open wound on your leg. Your doctor or nurse will recommend the correct bandage for you. The bandage may feel tight as it is wrapped around your leg. The pressure of the bandage will help pump blood back to your heart. It will also help reduce swelling and aid healing.

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Your doctor or nurse may place a special bandage directly on your wound. Many venous ulcers have germs that can delay or prevent healing. Bandages containing silver are often used because they reduce and get rid of germs.

## What should you do about it?

**It is very important to follow the directions given to you by your doctor or nurse.**

These directions may include:

- » Do not disturb or remove your bandage. The bandage may feel unpleasant at first because of the swelling in your leg. When the swelling goes down, your pain will decrease.
- » Walk during the day.
- » This condition will last the rest of your life. Once the wound is healed, you will need to wear compression stockings during the day. Wearing compression stockings will help prevent more wounds. Take them off at night. Your doctor or nurse will tell you which stocking is right for you.
- » Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water.

## Helpful hints

- » Raise your legs above your heart for 2 to 4 hours every day and every night.
- » Apply compression if your doctor or nurse says it is safe.
- » Remain active when standing in one place. Try marching or rocking from heel to toe.
- » Gently moisturize your skin.

### How to change your bandage:

- 1** Wash your hands with soap and water.
- 2** Collect the supplies you will need.
- 3** Get into a comfortable position to change your bandage.
- 4** Place a large plastic bag or cover on your bed or chair to protect it.

### How to remove your bandage:

- 5** Place your hand into a small clean plastic bag.
- 6** Grasp the old bandage with your bag-covered hand and gently remove your bandage.
- 7** Turn the bag inside out over the old bandage.
- 8** Close the bag tightly and throw it away.

### How to examine your arterial ulcer:

- 9** Look at your ulcer. As the wound heals, it will slowly become smaller and drain less. New tissue is pink or red and may look lumpy or shiny. **Do not disturb this tissue. Clean it gently.**
- 10** Tell your doctor or nurse if your wound gets bigger, if it has more drainage, if it is more painful or swollen, or if it is not better in 2 to 4 weeks.

### Bandage your wound *(doctor or nurse instructions):*

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### Doctor or nurse contact information:

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