

How do I use my graduated compression stockings?

We have written this leaflet to help you to understand how to use and wear the compression stockings that you have been given while in hospital. It does not replace explanations and information given to you by our staff but we hope you will find it a helpful guide to use before, during and after your stay in hospital. If you have any questions or need any further information please do not hesitate to ask your Doctor or Nurse.

Why have I been given graduated compression stockings?

These stockings help to reduce the risk of a blood clot forming in the legs. They do this by reducing leg swelling and preventing blood from collecting in the veins. It is very important that these are worn correctly.

What is a blood clot or deep vein thrombosis (DVT)?

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is the name given to a blood clot which forms inside a vein. Typically these clots form inside the veins of the leg, interrupting blood flow and making the leg swollen and painful.

Sometimes these clots can break off and become lodged in one of the arteries in the lung. This is called pulmonary embolism (PE) and can cause pain, breathlessness, and lack of oxygen in the blood which can be fatal.

DVT may also cause life long problems such as painful swollen legs, varicose veins and ulcers. It is estimated that 25,000 people who are admitted to hospital in the UK die from preventable blood clots each year.

DVT and PE are known together as venous thromboembolism (VTE)

What can I expect to happen?

A nurse will measure your legs to ensure you are given the correct size.

It is important that the stockings are fitted correctly, without any folding over or wrinkling.

The stockings will feel rather tight until you get used to them.

If the stockings are uncomfortable and do not fit properly, tell your nurse.

These stockings are supposed to be tighter than normal, and in the beginning you may require some help to get them on and off.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

When should I wear them?

The stockings should be worn day and night. The stockings should be removed each day to allow your legs to be washed, to inspect your legs and to report any concerns immediately. You will be shown how to take them off.

You should normally wear these stockings for about six weeks following the operation or your stay in hospital.

Do not allow your stockings to roll down as this may cause constriction and restrict your blood flow.

The stockings should be changed every three days so, if you require a fresh pair, please ask a member of staff.

When moving about you must wear slippers or shoes.

How do I care for the stockings?

If you are sent home with the stockings ensure they are removed daily and washed regularly. You should machine or hand wash them every three days in warm water. They can be washed at 40 degrees up to thirty times. Do not wring, but they can be cool tumble dried. Do not use bleach.

Can I do anything else to help prevent a blood clot?

There is a simple exercise you can do, even when you are lying in bed, to help your blood to move around your body.

- Lie on your back or sit in a chair
- Bend and straighten your ankles quickly
- If you keep your knees straight during the exercise you will stretch your calf muscles
- Repeat 20 times every hour.

When you go home from hospital

The risk of developing blood clots can continue for up to four weeks after you have gone home.

Make sure that you remember to walk around as much as you are able. Drink plenty of water and do the simple leg exercises above. If you have been asked to wear support stockings at home, please wear them for the recommended time (usually six weeks after your operation).

Raising your leg

As well as wearing compression stockings, you might be advised to raise your legs whenever you are resting. This helps to relieve the pressure in the veins of the calf and stops blood and fluid pooling in the calf itself.

When raising your legs, make sure that your foot is higher than your hip. This will help the returning blood flow from your calf. Putting a cushion underneath your leg while you are in a reclining position should help raise your leg above the level of your hip.

You can also slightly raise the end of your bed to ensure that your foot and calf are slightly higher than your hip when you are asleep.

Are there any side effects?

If you follow the advice given by your care team about how to use your stockings, it is unlikely that you will experience any problems.

However, you should report any problems to your nurse or doctor

- Unusual markings of the skin
- Any blistering of the skin
- Any discolouration of the skin especially over the heels
- Any pain to lower leg or foot.

Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information please ask a member of staff for advice.

If you have any questions or concerns after you have gone home from hospital please contact:

Ward: on: 01902 69

Other useful contacts

New Cross Hospital VTE nurse

Mobile via Switchboard: 01902 307999

NHS Direct: 111

NICE

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng89

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。