Compression Stockings

Why do you need compression stockings?
These stockings decrease or prevent swelling created by blood pooling in your legs. Leg swelling can lead to leg ulcers. The compression gently squeezes the legs and is like slipping on a new set of muscles to squeeze the blood back to your heart. Refer to Venous Leg Ulcers handout.

Can you wear your T.E.D.s instead?
No. T.E.D. stockings do not give enough pressure to control swelling. The white T.E.D. stockings are used in the hospital for a short time to prevent blood clots. Compression stockings are specially measured and have a prescribed pressure to control swelling.

Where can you get compression stockings?
Proper fit of compression stockings is important. Your legs need to be measured before stockings are purchased. The wound clinic nurse, a specially trained physical or occupational therapist or a certified fitter from a supplier may do measurements.

Medical supply houses and good pharmacies will be able to help you order compression stockings. Ask your nurse for a list of compression stocking dealers in your area.

Sometimes you can get a good price for stockings by searching the Internet. You will need to have your measurements and the prescribed compression strength before you make this type of purchase.

Will insurance pay for the stockings?
Generally, compression stockings are not covered by insurance. Check with your insurance company for further information. Costs range from $20 to $100, depending on your needs.

What style stocking should you buy?
Stockings generally are ordered in the knee-high version. They are also available in thigh-high and pantyhose for special needs. Speak with your doctor about this.

You will also have a choice of open toe or closed toe styles. Choose the style you prefer. If you have questions about this, talk with your doctor or wound clinic nurse.

How do you put these stockings on?
1. Turn your stocking inside out by putting your hand inside the foot, grabbing the heel and pulling the stocking inside out.

2. Slide the stocking onto the foot until the toe and heel are positioned correctly.

3. Pull the top of the stocking over the foot. Pulling at the heel area, work the stocking over the foot.

4. Once you have the stocking above the foot, grab the top of the stocking and pull up over the calf and into place. Smooth out any wrinkles. Check your stockings often and pull them up as needed.
If you cannot get your stockings on, contact your doctor or the wound clinic for help. Never give up and stop wearing your stockings. There are many ways to help you wear these stockings. One device that can help is the Jobst Stocking Donner. Ask your stocking supplier or wound clinic staff.

Precautions

- Never turn down the top of your stockings, roll or bunch the fabric as it creates too much pressure.
- If your stockings cause pain, cramping, rash or skin color changes, remove them and call your doctor.
- Remove your stockings at least once each day. Wash your legs and feet while looking for any redness areas or sores. Report any problems to your doctor as soon as possible.
- Do not use ointments, oils or lanolin on your legs or feet while wearing stockings. These will break down the fibers and damage your stockings.

Helpful hints

- Properly fitting stockings should feel snug at first. It may take several days to adjust to the pressure.
- Compression stockings are easiest to put on when you first get out of bed, before swelling begins.
- Remove rings and jewelry before putting on stockings. These can damage the stockings.
- Use rubber or vinyl gloves to help position the stockings on your leg. This gives you more grip.
- Make sure your skin is dry before putting on stockings.
- Apply a thin layer of cornstarch or powder to your legs to help the stockings slide easily.
- Apply lotion or moisturizer to your legs and feet in the evening, after removing your stockings. This allows the moisturizer to soak in before you reapply the stockings in the morning. Moisturizer can make it hard to pull on the stockings.

When do you need to wear the stockings?

It is important to wear compression stockings every day, all day while you are out of bed. Stockings are worn to manage a chronic problem that is still there, even if you do not have wounds. If you do not wear your stockings as prescribed, your condition could become worse or your wounds could return.

Wear your stockings any time you are up and out of bed. You may remove your stockings before you get into bed. However, if you sleep sitting up in a chair, you should wear your stockings all the time.

How do you care for the stockings?

Hand or machine-wash stockings with warm or cool water and a mild soap or detergent – no bleach. Rinse with warm water. Hand or lay flat to air-dry. You may dry stockings on the low heat setting or delicate setting of the dryer. Washing stockings in a mesh laundry bag will protect them during the wash cycle.

When do you need to replace them?

The elastic fibers of your stockings will break down with wear. Proper care can increase the life span of your stockings, but they will need to be replaced about every 3 to 6 months depending on how often you are wearing them. As a general rule, if your stockings are easy to put on, they need to be replaced.

You should be measured each time you purchase compression stockings. This will assure proper fit. Over time, your leg size may change. The compression strength will need to be the same as your original prescription. If you do not have the prescription, please contact your doctor’s office to get the compression strength before buying new stockings.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.