

Patient Guide

What you should know about venous leg ulcers.



What is a venous leg ulcer (VLU)?

A venous leg ulcer is typically a shallow, open, draining (oozing) wound typically located on the lower leg, near the inner ankle. They are often slow to heal.

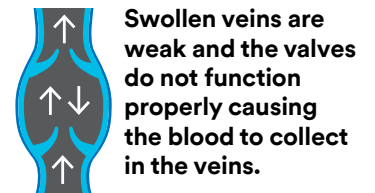
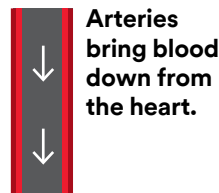


What causes a venous leg ulcer?

Blood is moved through the body by arteries and veins. Arteries bring blood from the heart to the rest of the body; veins return blood to the heart.

Veins have one-way valves that open and close when you move or walk. Movement helps move the blood back to the heart. If valves are damaged and do not close properly, blood flows backwards, causing veins to become wider due to pooling or collection of blood.

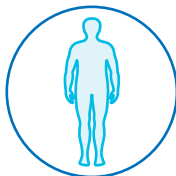
Over time, these wider, swollen veins cause swelling (edema) in your legs. Because of this, the skin around your ankle is very fragile and weak. If this part of the leg is hit, it can cause a wound that has a hard time healing, which is a VLU.



What puts me at risk for damaged veins or a venous leg ulcer?



Inactivity



Standing or sitting for prolonged periods of time



Being overweight



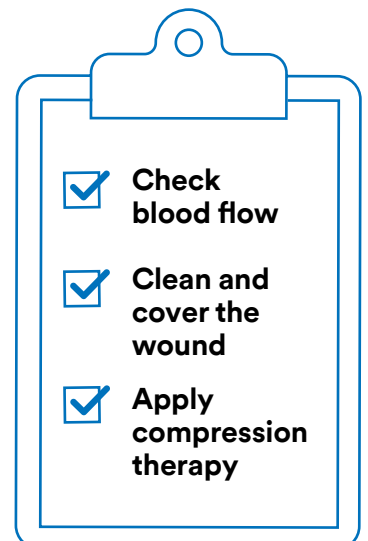
Smoking



Crossing legs

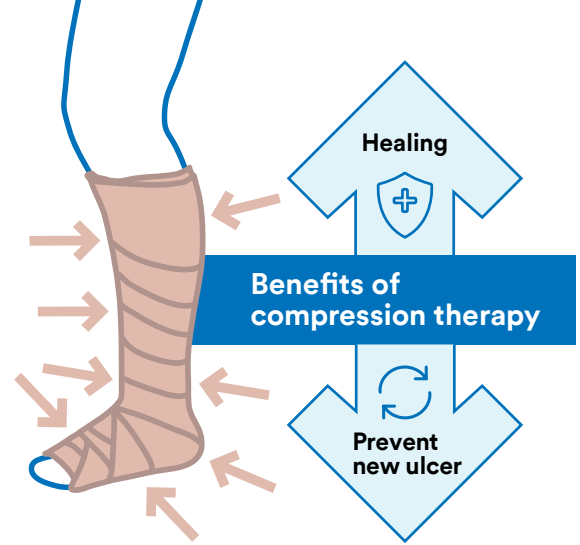
What is the treatment for a venous leg ulcer?

Treatment is prescribed by your doctor or health care provider.



What is compression therapy?

- Compression wraps support your calf and veins to help to improve the blood flow, and decrease the swelling in your leg. This helps to heal your wounds and increase your comfort.
- Compression wraps are changed one to two times a week by a health care provider.
- After the wound has healed, it's important to continue wearing some type of compression.



What are keys to preventing another venous leg ulcer?



Wear compression every day.



Remain active.
Avoid long periods of sitting or standing. Walk and move your legs often.



Elevate legs.
Between periods of sitting and standing, prop up your legs to reduce swelling.



Quit smoking.
Smoking damages blood vessels.



Maintain a healthy diet and weight.



Calf exercises

1 Stand
flat footed next to a table or chair.

2 Slowly
raise up on your toes (or try one foot at a time).

3 Hold
for a few seconds then lower to the ground.

Repeat as many times as you can to build strong muscles.



What are signs of trouble I should report?

Consult your health care provider if you experience any of these symptoms:

- Pain, numbness, tingling, burning
- Change in colour of toes (red, blue, pale)
- Increasing wound pain or size
- Increase in wound drainage
- Wound odour
- New skin breakdown
- New or increase in swelling
- Fever
- Pain or discomfort not relieved with rest, elevation, medication

This information is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of a licensed health care professional with any questions regarding a medical condition.



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Patient Education: Chronic Venous Disease (Beyond the Basics).
www.uptodate.com/contents/chronic-venous-disease-beyond-the-basics

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Wolters Kluwer Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society. 2019. Patient Education and Risk Reduction Strategies in Guidelines for the Management of Wounds in Patients with Lower-Extremity Venous Disease. WOCN Clinical Practice Guideline Series 4. Mt. Laurel: NJ. Author.

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