

About compression hosiery

Surgical Appliance Department
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Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

Why do I have to wear compression hosiery (support stockings)?

Our arteries supply nutrients to the cells, muscles and organs. The veins take blood full with waste products to the heart and then to the detoxification centres of the body. Only if the circulation is working properly can we live and stay healthy.

During sitting, standing and walking the blood in the veins has to flow uphill. Healthy veins do this easily with the help of the calf muscle (pump) and with a series of valves within the veins. With diseased veins, however, it leads to congestion of blood in the veins in the legs and the following problems can arise:

- Varicose veins
- Swollen legs (oedema)
- Leg ulcers
- Danger of thrombosis

Compression stockings can help with these conditions as they compress the leg and help the veins take the blood back up to the heart. They also counteract swelling in the legs.

How do I use my compression hosiery?

Please note: These instructions are specific to the hosiery supplied by the Surgical Appliance Department. If you have been given white anti-embolism stockings on discharge, please follow the directions given to you by the ward or department that issued them.

Put the compression hosiery on first thing in the morning, if possible before you get out of bed. This will give the best results.

Make sure that when you fit the stockings you stretch them evenly from the ankle upwards. Do not overstretch the hosiery.

When fitting the hosiery, be careful that you do not scratch your leg with a fingernail or ring as this could cause an ulcer. If the skin on your lower leg is very fragile, it may be advisable to wear an old pair of rubber gloves to reduce the danger of injury.

Take your hosiery off last thing at night, have your bath or shower (not too hot or this could damage your legs) and go straight to bed.

What else can I do to help my legs?

1. Movement of the calf muscles when walking, and wiggling the feet when sitting, will help the calf muscle pump the blood in the direction of the heart.
2. When sitting for any long period keep the legs raised.
3. Make sure you wear sensible footwear that fits correctly.

What should I try to avoid?

Try not to sit or stand in one position for long periods of time.

Be very careful when sunbathing that you do not burn your legs. It would be safer to keep your legs covered.

Try not to injure your legs.

When taking a bath or shower, make sure that the water is not too hot.

Try to keep your weight at a reasonable level.

How do I wash my hosiery?

Regular laundering will prolong the life of your hosiery and help to prolong the compression.

Wash by hand at 40 degrees centigrade.

Do not stretch during washing or drying, and lay them out flat for drying.

Dry naturally away from any direct heat, as placing in direct heat will cause the stocking to lose its compression quickly.

Do not tumble dry.

Further information

If you have any questions or problems with your support stockings, please contact the Surgical Appliance Officer, North Devon District Hospital.
Telephone: **01271 322492**.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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