

Resources

In your community

- ⇒ Columbia Medical Center
- ⇒ Tyrrell County Health Department

Online

- ⇒ <http://legclub.org/education.shtml>

Unfortunately, leg clubs are currently only in the UK, but this site offers great information, support, and explanation of how social factors and isolation can affect your response to treatment.

- ⇒ <http://www.medicaledu.com/Patients/default1.htm>

Offers great information, a free wound guide booklet that will be mailed to your house, and a list of local wound centers near you.



Created by Michelle O'Neill as part of a service-learning trip to Tyrrell County, NC in March 2013 through the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Doctorate of Physical Therapy program.

References

1. Grey JE, Enoch S, Harding KG. ABC of wound healing Venous and arterial leg ulcers. *BMJ*, 11 Feb 2006;332:347-350.
2. Davies J, Bull R, Farrelly I, Wakelin M. Improving the calf pump using home-based exercises for patients with chronic venous disease. *Wounds UK*, 2008,4(3):48-53.

What to do about...

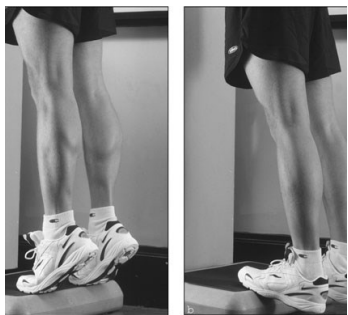
Venous Leg Ulcers

Treatment Strategies for you!



Your Part

Seeking treatment is the first, and most important, step in healing your wound, reducing the swelling of your leg (called edema), and/or returning your skin to a healthy texture and appearance. Once your doctor has decided the appropriate treatment for you, you will also have to follow a few guidelines to help achieve healing. This means wearing the appropriate compression stockings that your medical provider prescribes for you all the time. These will help to decrease the swelling in your legs. You should perform regular skin washing and moisturizing of your legs. Cracks in the skin's surface provides an area for bacteria to harbor, which can lead to infection. Keeping your legs elevated while seated or lying down will also help to control your leg swelling. It is important for you to complete calf exercises at least one time a day. The veins in your legs are squeezed every time your calf muscles contract. Since all veins have one-way valves that prevents blood from flowing backwards, this assists your venous system to pump

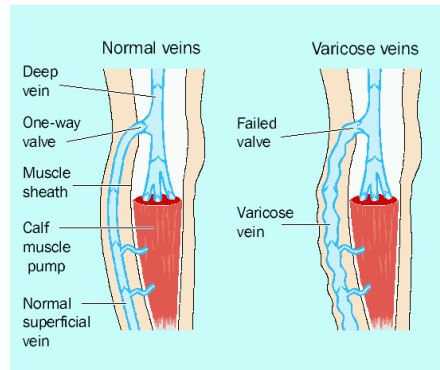


Calf raises on a stair. Aim for 3 sets of 15 twice a day.

blood out of your feet and legs back to your heart. Maintaining a proper diet will also assist your circulatory system's functioning.

What causes a venous leg ulcer?

Most venous leg ulcers are caused by inadequate functioning of the veins in the legs, specifically the valves. When the one-way valves malfunction, instead of deoxygenated blood only flowing up against gravity to return to the heart, the deoxygenated blood also flows backwards and accumulates in the legs. If your legs have become discolored and you have venous insufficiency, this is due to the breakdown of accumulated blood. This can block blood flow, severely diminish the ability of the surrounding tissue to heal, and become a source of infection.¹



What are the warning signs of an ulcer (new or recurring)?

- * Discoloration of the legs, usually dark red, purplish, or brown
- * Pain/aches in the legs; especially when standing or sitting
- * Swelling, usually around the ankles
- * Rash, dryness, or other changes in the skin around the lower legs

What should my diet look like?

- *Complex carbohydrates from whole grains, starchy vegetables, and fresh fruit
- *Healthy fats such as fish, olive oil, and nuts
- *Avoid unhealthy fats such as lard, butter, whole milk, and sausage.
- *Extra protein is very important
- *Consume 2g protein for every 2.2 pounds of body weight
- *Drink at least 8 (8oz) glasses a day
- *Sufficient amounts of vitamin A,C, and E; zinc; iron; and vitamin B12 (ex: milk, dark orange and green vegetables, oysters, crab, and red meat).
- *Supplementation may be necessary, seek consultation with your doctor

What exercises should I do?

Tip-toe and heel-toe walking while holding onto counter for balance, calf raises, Achilles stretching (foot flat on floor, one foot in front of the other greater than shoulder width apart, lean on wall or floor in front of you, stretch rear heel cord).²

Remember to wear your compression stockings or wraps all the time!