

Anti-Embolism Stockings

Patient Safety

Patient Information Leaflet

What are anti-embolism stockings?

These are stockings made with firm elastic that give graduated compression to the leg. Most are below the knee but occasionally some are full thigh length. Anti-embolism stockings help reduce the risk of blood clots or deep vein thrombosis (DVT) forming in your legs while you are in hospital and less active than normal.

How long will I need to wear them?

It is important to wear the stockings for as much of the time as possible, day and night, whether in hospital or afterwards at home, until you are back to your usual level of activity.



Caption: an anti-embolism stocking

How do I put the stockings on?

1. Find the heel of the stocking.
2. Put your hand into the stocking from the top and go down as far as the heel.



3. Hold onto the heel from the inside and use your other hand to pull the stocking inside out – only down to the heel.



4. Put the stocking over the foot and heel. The centre of your heel should be over the heel pocket of the stocking.



5. Pull the stocking over your ankle and calf, and up to your knee. Smooth out any spare material, making sure the heel is in the heel pocket.



6. If the stockings have a hole in the foot this should be positioned under the foot, towards the base of the toes.



7. To remove stockings, fold over at the top and pull off inside out. Avoid rolling the stocking down the leg since this can make it very tight.



How do I avoid problems with blood circulation and my skin when I have to wear the stockings?

Do not roll the stockings down, as they will form a tight band around your leg. This can be dangerous as it constricts the blood flow and can cause skin sores. Do not turn down the top of the stocking.

Take the stockings off once a day to wash your legs and feet, and to check the condition of your skin.

If you develop pain or discomfort, bruising or blisters, or areas where your skin has changed colour, you should stop wearing the stockings and seek immediate advice from your doctor or nurse.

If you develop numbness, pins and needles, pain soreness in your foot or leg, this may be a sign that the stockings are too tight. Remove the stockings and ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

If you have a rash on your legs or feet, which has appeared while you have been wearing the stockings, you may have an allergy to the elastic fibres in the stockings. Remove the stockings and ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

How do I look after my stockings?

If your doctor or nurse has told you to continue to wear your stockings at home, remember to:

Put on clean stockings at least every three days (or earlier if soiled). You will be given a spare pair from the hospital if you need to wear them after discharge. Please speak to the nurse if you require more pairs.

Wash stockings by hand or in a washing machine at no more than 40°C. Do not use bleach or fabric conditioner.

Spin or air dry. Do not wring out, tumble dry, or iron them, as this will damage the elastic.

Do not put the stockings on when they are wet.

Avoid using greasy ointments, oils, and lanolin on your skin as this damages the stockings' elastic fibres. However, a simple moisturiser can be used after washing your legs. Allow to dry before re-applying stockings.

With correct care, the stockings should last for up to three months. If you need to wear them for longer than this you should ask about getting a new supply.

Does everyone have to wear stockings?

You should not be offered anti-embolism stockings if:

- you have recently had a stroke
- you have peripheral vascular disease or have had peripheral arterial bypass grafting
- you have gangrene in your feet or legs or recent skin graft
- you have cellulitis or leg / foot ulcers
- you have dermatitis or fragile "tissue paper" skin on your legs
- you have fluid on the lungs caused by heart failure
- you have an allergy to the stocking material
- your legs are very swollen or you have a major limb deformity preventing correct fit or unusual leg size or shape
- you have peripheral neuropathy or other causes of sensory impairment
- a good stocking fit cannot be achieved

If you are unable to put on / remove the stockings or do not have anybody to do this daily at home, inform the nurse and doctor looking after you as you will not be suitable to use these after discharge.

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Useful Contact Details

NHS 111 (for 24 hour urgent health advice): telephone 111

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Evidence

Details of the evidence used in writing this leaflet are available on request from: Patient Information Officer at 01524 512476.

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact PALS on 01539 795497.

UHMBT is a no smoking Trust. Smoking is not permitted on any of the hospital sites. You can contact the NHS North Lancashire Stop Smoking services on the number below:

NHS Quit Squad - **0800 328 6297**

If you live in Cumbria, please call **0300 013 3000** to find a local pharmacy who are offers 1-2-1 support and nicotine replacement therapy.

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