



Which compression garment is right for you?

There is a wide range of compression garments available, each with their own characteristics and benefits. Understanding what these are can help you to find a garment that is right for you. Here, we explain the options available.



It is well recognised that people who need to wear compression garments for the long-term management of conditions such as lymphoedema or venous leg ulceration are more likely to do so if they are happy with the garment.

Garments that are comfortable, easy to apply and remove and that do not

cause pain during wear are key to the successful long-term use of compression. If a garment fits poorly, causes pain during wear or simply cannot be put on or removed easily by the wearer, it is unlikely to be tolerated for long, if at all.

Unfortunately, many people give up on wearing compression for reasons



such as discomfort or difficulties with application, without realising other options are available.

Why do I need a compression garment?

Compression therapy is a key part of the management of conditions such as venous leg ulcers and lymphoedema, which arise when there is an underlying problem with the venous and/or lymphatic systems.

Compression works by moving blood and excess fluid from the tissues back into the lymphatic system. By easing congestion in the tissues, swelling is reduced and wounds are more likely to heal.

In most cases, bandaging is often used to deliver compression in the short term. In people with lymphoedema, bandaging is used in intensive therapy, which aims to reduce swelling. In people with venous leg ulcers, it can be used to reduce the size of the wound and to reduce any swelling present. Compression garments are then recommended in the long-term management of both conditions, to heal ulceration, and prevent the return of swelling and breakdown of healed wounds.

Sadly, many people give up wearing their compression once their swelling has reduced or their wound has healed

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as they wrongly believe that their treatment in completed. This is a mistake, as the underlying condition is still present, and needs management with compression in the long-term.

If compression is not worn, the chance of the problem returning is high. For example, venous leg ulcers recur in 70% of healed people within three months.

Picking the right garment for you, that you are happy to wear in the long term is therefore important if you are to optimise your leg health.

What compression garment choices are available?

Compression therapy can be delivered by several different garments, including hosiery and leg ulcer hosiery kits, and compression wrap systems.

Hosiery

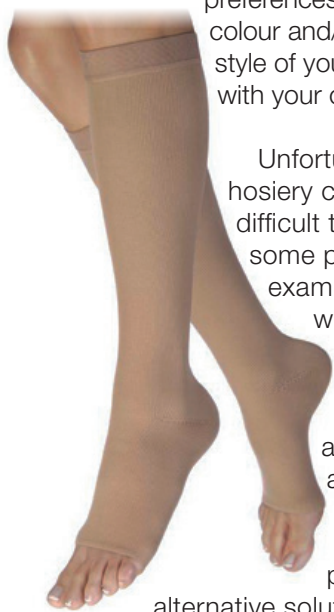
Hosiery is often used in the long-term management of lymphoedema to maintain the reduction in swelling achieved during intensive treatment. In people with venous leg ulceration, it is used to maintain healing and prevent recurrence.

Hosiery kits may also be used to heal venous leg ulcers as they have been shown to be as effective as bandaging in suitable patients.



Your healthcare professional will advise on the best type of garment for you. The fabric that the garment is made from should be selected to meet your needs. For example, the stiffer fabric of a flat-knit garment is usually recommended for the persistent swelling associated with lymphoedema, while thinner circular knit hosiery may be appropriate for someone with a healed venous leg ulcer.

Similarly, the amount of compression the hosiery delivers, known as its class, can vary and it is important that you get a garment that delivers the correct amount for your condition. Finally, if you wear hosiery to manage limb swelling, the garment should cover and contain the swollen areas, otherwise it may displace the swelling to the outsides of the garment. You can discuss your preferences for the colour and/or top band style of your garment with your clinician too.



Unfortunately, hosiery can be difficult to apply for some people, for example, those with limited mobility or hand grip. Application aids are available, but a wrap system may provide an alternative solution.



Wrap systems

Wraps are compression systems that wrap around the limb and which are fastened using VELCRO® straps. Wraps can be tightened or loosened if needed, for example, if swelling increases or decreases over time. Some wraps also have built-in features that enable the wearer to check that the compression pressure being delivered is correct following application.

Wraps can be applied by the wearer, or a carer, increasing independence and the ability to self-care. They are particularly useful for people who are eligible to wear hosiery, but struggle to apply and remove it.

Finding a garment that meets your needs while managing your condition is key to long-term treatment success. Your needs may change with time, meaning you may wish to change your garment to suit your situation. You will need to discuss your options with your healthcare professional to make sure the garment is best for you. 