

Put your feet up or get moving more?

Have you been advised to elevate your legs and rest, while also being told to move more? This conflicting advice can be confusing so here we explain why both have a part in maintaining your limb health.

Elevation

Looking after your legs with a lower limb condition is all about considering the effects of gravity.

Whatever you are doing, gravity pulls the blood and fluids in your body downwards. This means when you stand for a long period of time, such as on a day out shopping or at work, the blood in your legs must travel upwards to return to your heart.

If you have venous or lymphatic disease which affects how

your veins work, the effect of gravity after a long day can mean blood and fluid begins to collect in the tissues of your legs. This is why you may see swelling or fuller veins in your legs after spending some time on your feet, and may experience aching, pain and a feeling of fullness in your limbs.

Wearing compression when on your feet can help to counteract this. So too can resting with your feet elevated ideally equal to, or above, the level of your heart. This position helps gravity to work in your favour by returning the blood and fluids back to the heart, to reduce your symptoms.



Exercise

Exercising can help to return fluid from your lower limbs. With movement, the calf and foot muscles squeeze blood and fluid in the legs upwards towards the heart, and out of the tissues of the limbs. This effect is even greater when wearing compression as the garment provides resistance to the muscles, making them squeeze harder.

Any movement of the feet and legs can have this effect, so you can pick an activity to suit you. This could be simple foot

exercises, such as ankle rotations, while sitting. Standing up and walking at regular intervals, such as during ad breaks in a tv show, or going for a walk each day. The key is to aid your circulation to keep you blood moving and prevent it pooling in your limbs.

Strike a balance

As with anything, achieving a balanced approach is key! Too long resting means your overall health and fitness may suffer, and resting with your legs in a downwards or prone position can result in blood pooling, like if you have been standing for a prolonged period.

A balanced approach is to wear compression

during activity so your exercise has maximum impact, and rest with legs elevated whenever possible. ▶

