

How compression therapy makes legs better

Here, we explain how compression therapy works to improve lower limb health and why wearing it in the long term helps to maximise its benefits. Whatever you do, keep on wearing your compression to keep your legs healthy for life.

If you have a condition of the lower limb, such as varicose veins, venous eczema, a venous leg ulcer or lymphoedema, your healthcare professional may have recommended that you wear a compression garment.

This is because compression therapy is recognised as the gold standard treatment for the long-term management of these conditions and others that arise when the venous and/or lymphatic systems are not working properly.

Compression therapy only works when a garment is worn — if it is removed, the help it gives to the veins and lymphatics are lost.

Sometimes, when a wound heals or swelling reduces, the wearer stops using compression. Failing to wear the garment, however, causes recurrence as the underlying problem is still there but is no longer being managed. To maintain your limb health in the long term, it is therefore important to wear

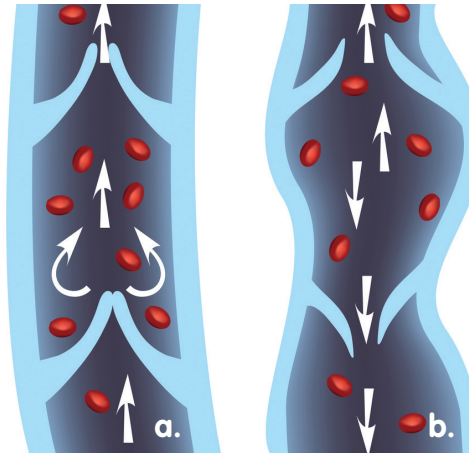


your compression garment every day to reap the benefits and to prevent deterioration of your condition.



What causes the problem?

The lower limbs have veins that return deoxygenated blood from the feet back to the heart. As the blood needs to travel upwards against gravity, the veins have a number of valves that prevent the blood from flowing backwards (a). If, however, the valve is faulty, blood can flow backwards in the vein, where it begins to pool (b), causing increased blood pressure and congestion in the tissues. In the long term, this can cause problems such as skin changes, varicose veins, swelling and eventually, ulceration.



How does compression help?

A vein with faulty valves allows the pooling of blood (c). Lower limb compression garments work by forming a casing around the leg which enhances the contraction of the calf and foot muscles when they move (d). This provides resistance that helps the muscles to squeeze blood within the vein upwards, reducing congestion within the tissues, to alleviate symptoms and improve leg health. ▶

