

A person having Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) on the leg, is at risk of developing chronic (long-term) pain and swelling, called **Post-Thrombotic Syndrome (PTS)**.

PTS occurs in approximately 20-40% of people with DVT and varies from person-to-person in its severity.

Symptoms of PTS include:

- Chronic swelling
- Chronic pain, pressure, heaviness, tightness or leg tiredness
- Skin hardening or itching
- Dark pigmentation, visible spider veins
- Ulcers (skin breakdown)

Your risk of developing PTS can be reduced by wearing special graduated compression stockings which are designed to decrease or prevent swelling.

How do Compression Stockings work?

Compression Stockings work by putting pressure on the veins in your leg. They are called graduated compression stockings because the pressure is greatest at your ankle and reduced further up your leg. When you walk or exercise your legs, Compression Stockings help the natural pump mechanism of the muscles in your leg to improve circulation.

Compression Stockings come in knee-high or full-length with a toeless option. If the leg swelling is below the knee, then a below-knee stocking is appropriate, but if swelling also involves the thigh, then an above-knee stocking

may be needed. Your health care provider will indicate which length is right for you.

The most common recommended tightness following DVT is 30-40mmHg pressure or European Class II.

Compression Stockings should be individually fitted to insure a correct fit. TED-stockings (white surgical stockings) are not sufficiently tight – they have less than the required mmHg pressure and are not useful to prevent or treat the swelling after a DVT.

How do I wear Compression Stockings?

For maximum effectiveness, you should begin wearing compression stockings as soon as possible after being diagnosed with a DVT – typically within one week, once the initial more pronounced swelling has decreased and medication to thin the blood has been commenced.

Compression stockings should be worn for 2 years or beyond that if patients have developed PTS and find the stockings helpful. Below are some tips on wearing compression stockings:

- Put compression stockings on first thing in the morning before you start moving around when your leg is less swollen.
- Remove stockings at bedtime. There is no need to wear them at night.

- Most stockings are sold in pairs, but you need only to wear a stocking on the leg affected by the DVT.
- You should wear compression stockings every day for as long as they continue to make your leg feel better.
- Every day check the condition of your skin. When checking your skin you need to look out for: sore marks at the top of your legs, blisters or discolouration, especially on your heels or ankle bones. If you spot any of these signs, or if you're worried, do not put your stockings back on and talk to your General Practitioner.
- Take care to prevent your skin becoming dry by applying an emulsifying cream to your legs.
- To help blood flow in your legs, do not sit, stand still, or lie in bed for long periods. Take regular walks around the house and do gentle foot and ankle exercises when sitting down. Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- When travelling by air avoid taking sleeping tablets and alcohol. Keep well hydrated drink plenty of water. Ensure you are keeping mobile and not sitting still for long periods.



How do I put on Compression Stockings?

Compression stockings are designed to be tight. They are difficult to put on and take off so you may need someone to help you with this. To make it easier:

- Make sure your skin is dry. If you use lotion, be sure it is completely absorbed before putting on the stocking. Talcum powder can help make the stocking glide on more smoothly.
- Medical supply shops carry devices which can help guide the stocking smoothly over the leg, ask about 'stocking aides'.
- Insert your hand into the stocking as far as the heel pocket and turn the stocking inside out.
- Carefully slip your foot into the foot portion and ease the stocking over your heel – make sure your heel is centred in the heel pocket.
- Bring the rest of the stocking over your heel and up around your ankle and calf, gently pull the stocking up the leg and smooth out any creases.
- Knee-high stockings – the top of the stocking sits below your knee.
- Thigh-high stockings – the top of the stocking rests below your buttocks.
- Do not fold or roll down your stockings while wearing them – this can affect how well they work and may restrict blood flow through your legs, also if your stocking keeps falling or sliding down then you probably need a shorter stocking or a different size.
- Replace compression stockings as needed. Over time, the fabric will lose its elasticity. Stockings last about 4 to 6 months.

How do I care for Compression Stockings?

- Wash the stockings after each use. Washing removes oils and dirt and helps fabric keep its elasticity.
- Hand or machine wash - check the label for specific recommendations.
- Do not wring and twist the stockings.
- Air-dry the stocking. Some stockings can be dried on the delicate cycle of a dryer - check the label.

Who do I contact for help and advice?

Any concerns or queries relating to DVT or PTS please contact your GP

Where can I buy Compression Stockings?

European Class II Compression Stockings are available from:

- The Veins Unit, St James's Hospital (01) 4162174
- Any Medical Supplies Shop

This leaflet is for general information only and is not a substitute for medical advice.



Compression Stockings

Patient Information Leaflet



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