



## Leg problems in pregnancy

Hormonal changes take place in the legs during the first ten weeks of pregnancy. These hormonal changes cause the blood vessel walls to relax and combining this with increased blood volume during pregnancy, varicose veins can occur.

Prescriptions for compression hosiery are free during pregnancy to help to keep your legs healthy and manage vein problems. See your GP or midwife for more information.



## What should I do next?

If you have any concerns about the condition of your legs, even if you do not have exactly the same symptoms as described in this leaflet, it may be appropriate for your legs to be professionally assessed. Speak to your doctor or nurse, who may give you a more thorough examination.

This may include a full health check and a review of the circulation in your lower legs, which will decide whether the veins in your legs are working well or not. If you do have a problem with your legs, then compression hosiery may be prescribed. These will treat your existing problem and help prevent further difficulties.



Activa® compression hosiery is available on prescription



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This leaflet is endorsed by  
The Lindsay  
**LegClub**  
Foundation  
[www.legclub.org](http://www.legclub.org)



## Useful leg exercises to help improve your circulation



For further information  
on leg health please visit

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## Taking care of your legs



## What is venous disease?

Blood has to flow from our feet and legs towards our heart through our veins. As the blood flow works against gravity, blood can sometimes pool in the lower legs and feet. This pooling increases the pressure in the veins which can cause damage, resulting in venous disease.

## Who is at risk of venous disease and vein problems?



The risk of venous disease increases with age as damage to the veins worsens over time



Recent study suggests pregnancy increases the odds of developing varicose veins by 82%



Being overweight or having a large waist circumference increases the risk of venous disease



If you stand for long periods due to work or a hobby this can increase your risk of developing venous disease



Sitting for a long time without moving around can increase the risk of leg problems. This includes sitting at a desk for long-periods of time



Smoking causes damage to blood vessels which can result in venous disease



Air travel for longer than 3 hours can increase the risk of a deep vein thrombosis (DVT)



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# 🔍 Signs to look out for...



**Tired aching legs**  
Legs feel sore and heavy as blood stretches the veins in the legs

## Varicose veins

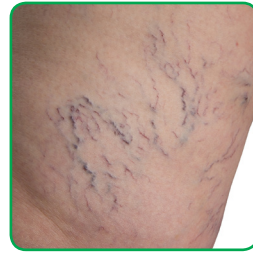
Bulging veins stretched by blood not returning to the heart efficiently - caused by stretched veins and damaged valves



**Wearing compression hosiery can help prevent and manage all of the above signs of venous disease. Speak to your healthcare professional or pharmacist about an assessment for Activa® or ActiLymph® hosiery.**

## Spider veins

Tiny blood vessels which have stretched to become visible



## Swollen ankles

Puffiness from blood and fluid pooling in the legs, often caused by standing or sitting for long periods (the swelling in the ankle reduces once you have put your feet up)

## Ankle flare

Blood vessels are enlarged by blood pooling in the feet



## Do's & Don'ts for lifelong leg health

### Do...

- ...regularly moisturise your legs
- ...walk and exercise regularly
- ...eat a balanced diet and watch your weight
- ...put your feet up
- ...check your legs and feet regularly
- ...get treatment for any knocks or sores if around the ankle, particularly if you suffer from diabetes
- ...try to give up smoking



### Don't...

- ...cross your legs for long periods
- ...stand still or sit for long periods without moving around
- ...ignore any sores or irritations
- ...assume that your leg will just get better by itself
- ...remain inactive for extended periods, e.g long journeys



# Common problems

## Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

DVT is a blood clot that forms mainly in the deep veins of the legs as a result of sluggish blood flow.

Research has shown that even short journeys of three hours can put you at risk of a DVT.

Activa® hosiery is ideal if you are travelling short or long haul and is available through your pharmacist.

## Venous leg ulcers

A venous leg ulcer is a wound on your skin, on your lower leg, that fails to heal even after several weeks. Compression hosiery and bandages support your veins to encourage the blood flow back up the legs helping the leg to heal and preventing the wound reoccurring.

If you have a venous leg ulcer it is essential that you see a healthcare professional for an assessment.

## Arterial ulcers

Fatty deposits can collect in your arteries causing them to narrow, meaning less blood flow to your lower legs. This can cause your legs to feel cold and painful, especially when your legs are elevated. When the blood flow is reduced ulcers can occur.

Wearing compression is not recommended if you have arterial problems, unless a specialist has advised it is appropriate.

## Foot problems in diabetes

Foot problems are one of the most common reasons for someone with diabetes being admitted to hospital. People who have diabetes should take special care with their legs and feet and should not wear compression products without taking advice from a specialist healthcare professional. In addition, it is recommended that you should also visit a podiatrist on a regular basis.

## Chronic Oedema/Lymphoedema

Oedema means the build up of an excess amount of fluid in your legs that causes them to appear swollen.

Lymphoedema is swelling in your legs as a result of an infection or damage to the lymphatic system.

As well as swelling, this can lead to thickening of the skin and repeated episodes of skin infection if not treated properly with a daily care routine including compression therapy.

## How compression therapy works

Compression therapy often in the form of compression hosiery aids the blood in your leg veins being pushed back up to your heart. Wearing them can stop legs feeling tired and heavy, varicose veins will no longer bulge and any wounds on your leg will have a healthy blood supply to help them heal.

Compression hosiery should always be prescribed by a nurse or doctor to make sure it is safe for you to wear.

## What should I do if I'm advised to wear compression hosiery?

If you are advised to wear compression hosiery, it is important that you wear the hosiery - ideally, every day.

Modern compression hosiery uses lightweight, comfortable yarns, virtually impossible to tell apart from regular hosiery.

If your hosiery is not comfortable or is difficult to put on, please speak to your doctor or nurse. It is important that you get the correct fit and that you know how to put them on easily.

Compression hosiery will help the blood return up the leg, thereby:

- reducing the likelihood of venous disease
- reducing the swelling and aching in the leg
- reducing irritation and discoloration of the skin

