

Anti-Embolism Stockings and Intermittent Pneumatic Compression to reduce the risk of Venous Thrombo-Embolism (VTE)



About this leaflet

Patients who have reduced mobility whilst in hospital, for example after surgery, are at a greater risk of developing blood clots. Reduced mobility causes blood flow in the veins to be reduced which can result in blood 'pooling' in the lower legs and lead to the development of a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT).

Anti-embolism stockings and Intermittent Pneumatic Compression sleeves are common types of mechanical device which can be worn or applied to the lower legs to increase the blood flow and reduce the risk of blood clots occurring.

Anti-embolism stockings

What are anti-embolism stockings?

Anti-embolism stockings are special stockings which provide a gradual level of compression to your lower leg to increase the flow of blood back to your heart. They are usually fitted below the knee and should be worn both day and night until your mobility returns to normal.

The medical team caring for you will assess whether you are suitable for anti-embolism stockings as some patients, such as those who have had a stroke or have skin conditions, should not wear them. If you are provided with anti-embolism stockings there is usually no need for you to continue to wear them after you leave hospital unless you are specifically told to do so.

Why do I need to wear them?

Patients who are admitted to hospital are usually treated with blood thinning injections to reduce

their risk of developing blood clots. However not all patients are suitable to receive these, for example if they are bleeding, have a suspected injury, or have a reduced number of clotting cells in the blood. In these cases patients will usually be given anti-embolism stockings to wear.

Patients who have surgery may be given both blood thinning injections **and** anti-embolism stockings to reduce their risk of blood clots developing.

How do I put on the stockings?

1. Put your hand into the stocking as far as the heel.
2. Hold the heel and turn the stocking inside out as far as possible.
3. Put the stocking over your foot and heel. The centre of your heel should be over the heel pocket of the stocking.
4. Pull the stocking up and fit it around your ankle and calf. Smooth out any excess material making sure the heel and toe are in the correct position.

While in hospital, the nursing staff will help you with this.

What should I do to avoid problems when wearing my stockings?

1. Don't roll the stockings down, as they may form a tight band around your leg.
2. Avoid using creams, ointments and oils as they can damage the elastic.

3. Check your feet and legs every day for any discolouration of the skin, especially over bony areas. If the skin is discoloured it means the stockings don't fit well or there is too much pressure on the blood vessels.
4. If a rash develops it may mean you have an allergy to the lycra or elastic fibres in the stockings.
5. If you start to feel numbness, pins and needles, or increased pain in your foot, tell a member of your healthcare team.

If you develop any of these problems stop wearing the stockings and:

- **speak to one of the ward staff if you are in hospital or**
- **contact your GP surgery if you are at home.**

How do I look after my stockings?

6. Put on clean stockings at least every 5 days.
7. Stockings can be washed in a machine on a warm cycle, 40 degrees temperature. Don't use harsh bleaches.
8. Best results are from drying naturally but they can be tumble dried on a low setting.

Once you have returned to your normal level of mobility there is no need for you to keep wearing your stockings.

Intermittent Pneumatic Compression

What is Intermittent Pneumatic Compression?

Intermittent Pneumatic Compression sleeves are applied to the legs and gently inflate and deflate to apply compression to the leg – often in sequence starting with the ankle, then the calf and finishing with the thigh. This copies the normal pumping action of the muscles in the leg when walking and increases the blood flow in the legs to prevent the formation of Deep Vein Thrombosis.

The medical team caring for you will assess whether you are suitable for Intermittent Pneumatic Compression and a member of staff will measure and fit you with the correct size sleeves which should be worn 24 hours a day.

The sleeves will be removed daily for bathing, to allow staff to assess your skin condition and to enable you to have physiotherapy. There will be no need for you to continue to wear the sleeves after you leave hospital.

Why do I need to wear them?

Some patients, such as those who have had a stroke, are unsuitable for blood thinning injections or anti-embolism stockings and so will need Intermittent Pneumatic Compression to reduce their risk of developing a blood clot whilst they are in hospital.

Some surgical patients may also be given Intermittent Pneumatic Compression to wear when they return from theatre.

What should I do if I have problems when wearing the sleeves?

1. Please inform a member of staff if the sleeves are not inflating regularly or if you suspect the machine has been switched off.
2. Inform the staff if the sleeve feels either too tight or too loose.
3. If you start to feel numbness, pins and needles or increased pain in your foot, tell a member of your healthcare team.

Any questions?

It is important that you understand the treatment offered and that you consent to treatment. Please speak with your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns regarding your care. They will be able to provide you with more information and advice.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

