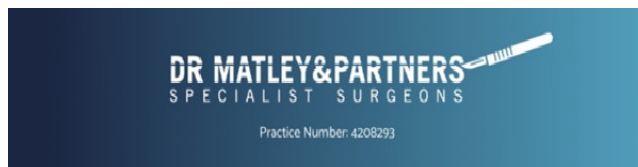


- Exercise regularly, this assists the calf muscles to pump blood up the veins. If you are unable to walk, try moving your feet up and down while you are sitting or lying.
- Look after your feet and wear correctly fitting shoes.
- Try to keep your bandages in place on your leg/ s. If you are concerned then contact our nursing staff straight away.
- Elevate your legs whenever possible.
- Wash and cream your legs regularly to avoid dry easily damaged skin.
- Seek medical or nursing advice as soon as you damage your skin.
- Never try to heal the wound yourself.



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Venous Leg Ulcers

What is a leg ulcer?

A leg ulcer is a wound on the lower part of the leg that takes longer than six weeks to heal. The usual cause of onset is a minor injury that breaks the skin. In most people such an injury will heal up without difficulty within a week or two. However, if there is an underlying problem, the skin may not heal. For those at risk, leg ulcers can develop quickly and if untreated may last for years. It is important that they are properly diagnosed so that the correct treatment can be given.

Leg ulcers can be treated successfully.

What causes leg ulcers?

Leg ulcers are usually due to a problem with your veins (venous) or arteries (arterial). There are less common causes for leg ulcers such as diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis. Veins are the blood vessels that carry blood back to the heart. When your leg muscles move they help squeeze the blood back to the heart. The valves in the veins stop the blood from flowing backwards (downwards). If these valves are damaged, blood flows back down the legs. This results in the veins becoming stretched and under the reversed pressure, fluid can leak out into the surrounding tissues causing swelling of the legs. This can result in poor skin nutrition and in the development of a venous ulcer.

How will your ulcer be treated?

The majority of venous ulcers are treated by compression therapy. This improves the blood flow out of the leg. Pressure therapy involves wearing several layers of bandages, which are usually changed on a weekly basis.

Mobility and your ulcer

You should rest with your legs elevated whenever possible. Try to exercise regularly. If you are unable to walk try moving your feet up and down whilst sitting or lying.

How long will it take for my ulcer to heal?

It has usually taken many years for the venous disease to cause the ulcers, so it is not surprising that the ulcers may take a fairly long time to heal. Although many venous ulcers will heal in 3-4 months a small proportion can take considerably longer. Ulcers which have been present for months or years are slower to heal and a stage may be reached where healing is difficult without a period of bedrest in hospital. If your ulcer is due to varicose veins, then these may be treated when your ulcer has healed.

How can I stop the ulcer from coming back?

Once the ulcer has healed, compression stockings are necessary to prevent the ulcer from returning. The stockings should be worn at all times during the day. If you are unable to re-apply the stockings daily, they can be left in place overnight and changed when possible with help from a relative or our nursing staff. You may also find it useful to buy an applicator specially designed to help you apply the stockings.

Helpful hints

- Once your ulcer is healed, it does not mean that the problems with your veins are over. Although the skin is intact, the underlying problem with the veins remains. You must take precautions to prevent the ulcer recurring.
- Look at your legs and feet for any changes in colour.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet.
- Try to lose weight if you are overweight as increased weight puts more strain on the veins.