



**This is a guide only and does not
replace clinical judgment**

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Venous Leg Ulcers

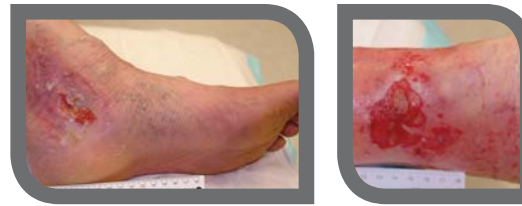
Information for health professionals



Venous Leg Ulcers

Assessment

- Measure an Ankle Brachial Pressure Index (ABPI) on all clients with a leg ulcer
- An ABPI should only be undertaken by health practitioners with training
- ABPIs should be repeated:
 - whenever starting compression therapy
 - whenever changing type of compression
 - if an ulcer deteriorates or fails to progress
 - every 3 months
- Regularly measure the ulcer, every 4 weeks or as clinically indicated to monitor progress
- Refer to a specialist if:
 - there is uncertainty in diagnosis
 - there is a low or high ABPI (<0.9 or >1.2)
 - ulcers of complex aetiology
 - signs of infection or deterioration
 - failure to improve after three months



Management

- Multilayer compression bandaging is the first line of treatment for uncomplicated venous ulcers
- Compression therapy should be applied by a trained practitioner
- Protective padding should be used over bony prominences when applying compression
- Dressings should be simple, low-adherent, cost effective and acceptable to the individual
- Avoid products that commonly cause skin sensitivity (e.g. lanolin, phenol alcohol)
- Specialist leg ulcer clinics are recommended as the optimal community health service

Venous leg ulcers typically:

- occur on the lower third of the leg
- are usually shallow
- have irregular, sloping wound margins
- produce moderate to heavy exudate
- pain is relieved by elevation of the legs



Prevention

- Use of compression stockings for life reduces leg ulcer recurrence
- Compression stockings should be measured and fitted by a trained practitioner
- Replace compression stockings every six months
- Teaching people how to apply their stockings is essential
- A variety of stocking applicators are available
- Strategies to prevent recurrence also include:
 - venous investigation and surgery
 - regular follow-up and skin checks
 - lower limb exercises
 - elevation of lower limbs above heart level
 - ensuring optimal nutrition and hydration

Venous ulcers are the most common type of leg ulcer and account for 60-70% of all leg ulcers