



Compression Therapy

Overview

You have been prescribed compression therapy to help decrease the swelling (edema) and pain in your legs, ankles, and feet. Compression therapy entails wrapping an elastic-type bandage around your extremities in order to push out extra fluid and improve blood flow. It is important to control this swelling in order to prevent fluid from “pooling” in your lower legs, which may delay healing and cause additional ulcers to form.

There are several types of compression wraps available and your provider will choose the one that best fits your needs. The compression wrap (usually several layers) will be applied over your foot and part of your leg, typically from your toes to your knees. Prior to the compression wrap being applied, a dressing will be placed over your wound. There will be no need to change the dressing on your wound while you wearing the compression wrap.

Compression therapy has shown positive results in thousands of patients, but it may take some time adjust to the feeling of being “wrapped up or bound”.

The Causes of Swelling

Many factors can contribute to swollen and painful legs such as injury, venous disease (issues with the blood vessels), obesity, jobs that require standing for long periods, long flights/car travel, frequent sitting with the legs dependent (below the heart), or decreased walking/physical activity of the legs.

Speak with your provider to strategize how to manage these life challenges in order to better promote healing and (hopefully) prevent future issues.

Changing Your Wrap

It is expected that you will have more drainage the first few weeks because the excess fluid will escape through your open wound. If your wound is draining heavily or if the swelling is responding rapidly to compression, your dressing may need to be changed every 3-5 days. As the swelling decreases, the drainage will decrease, and the dressing may stay in place for up to one week.

Contact your provider for the following situations:

- If the swelling decreases rapidly and the wrap slips, causing pressure or discomfort.
- You have fluid that leaks from a wound to the outside of the wrap and the spot is more than four inches wide.
- The wrap gets wet, wrinkled or folded.

Note: Please attempt to contact your provider before removing the wrap.

However, if you experience any of the issues noted above, it may be necessary to remove it prior to your next visit. It is important that you keep the wound dressing in place over the wound (or apply another one if dislodged). Do not leave the wound exposed to air.

Tips and Additional Information

- Keep your compression wrap clean and dry and avoid getting it wet. Many pharmacies sell “cast protector” type products that can be used to protect your compression wrap during a shower. You may also use a trash bag to cover the wrap, but be very careful to avoid slipping. It may be best to take “sponge” baths during your course of treatment to avoid risk.
- You may use a knee-high stocking over the wrap to prevent it from sticking to sheets and clothing.
- You may need to wear a larger shoe while in a compression wrap.
- Avoid smoking because nicotine causes the blood vessels to get smaller, resulting in less oxygen delivery to your tissue. Toxins can build up in the tissue and cause even more swelling. Please speak with your provider about smoking cessation programs in your area.
- A compression wrap is not a permanent solution. Once the swelling is decreased to a stable size, then the leg may be measured for compression stockings or an inelastic compression device to manage the swelling.
- In addition to compression therapy, there are other actions you can take to help remove (and maybe prevent) the swelling. Elevating your legs above your heart (or as high as your provider recommends), walking, moving as much as possible, contracting/releasing the muscles while you are sitting and avoiding for too long. Even rocking in a rocking chair can promote better blood flow while delivering a moment of relaxation and healing.
- Eat well, rest well, and follow your plan of care.

Important

Remove the compression wrap and seek **immediate** medical attention in the following situations:

- Any sudden change in blood flow causing blue, white or purple discoloration of the toes/feet.
- Sudden onset of pain and/or “more” (increased) pain that doesn’t go away.
- Sudden decrease in sensation of the feet, numbness or cold temperature of the feet/toes.

For emergency situations, contact/visit an urgent care center, an emergency department or call 911.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL:
Silver Cross Wound Healing and Hyperbaric

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