



What is Venous Insufficiency?

Venous insufficiency is caused by valves in the veins of your legs that do not function well enough to keep blood from backflowing to your heart. When the valves begin to fail, blood collects in your calves and causes edema (swelling) and ulcers.

Venous insufficiency can be caused by heredity, obesity, muscle atrophy, trauma, and various systemic diseases.

The ulcers caused by venous insufficiency are usually irregular in shape, painful, and typically drain large amounts of clear fluid. The skin around the ankles and lower extremities may develop a brownish discoloration. Swelling in the legs usually is worse in the evenings or when legs are kept in a position lower than the heart.

What to Look For

Characteristics of a Venous Insufficiency Ulcer

- Swelling
- Discoloration of skin
- Extremely dry skin
- Irregularly shaped ulcers
- Large amounts of drainage

Steps You Can Take

- Elevate your feet above the level of your heart while sleeping and at least 2 times a day for 30 minutes
- Avoid situations that require you to sit or stand for long periods of time—change positions regularly
- Take walks to help the leg muscles “pump” the fluid out of your legs
- Moisturize your skin daily or twice daily depending on your needs
- Wash your legs and feet regularly to prevent a buildup of moisturizers on the skin
- Do not soak feet—this can cause your vessels to dilate below the level of your heart which worsens venous insufficiency
- Try to avoid activities that are likely to cause injury to feet or lower extremities
- Protect your lower extremities from sharp corners on tables, chairs, etc.

Compression Therapy

Compression is the Key

When the valves in your veins are failing or have failed and your calf muscles do not adequately “pump” the blood out of your extremities, you can help this action by using compression stockings. These stockings should cover from the toes to the knees. There are numerous compression stockings available over-the-counter or by prescription. Regardless of the type of stocking you have, the following rules should be followed:

- Apply stocking in the morning before fluids have pooled in legs, ankles, or feet
- Have 2 pairs of stockings to change and launder daily– hang to dry, do not put in dryer
- Wear stockings all day and remove at night when sleeping
- Buy new stockings every 6 months to maintain elasticity
- Avoid ace bandages as these are difficult to wrap properly to provide the needed graduated pressure

When Should I Have Someone Look at My Skin?

If you are suffering from any of the symptoms of venous insufficiency, you may benefit from the advice of a professional trained in the care of this specific disease.

- Do you have a new wound that you do not know what caused it?
- Do you have a bruise that will not go away or keeps getting worse?
- Does your wound not show significant signs of healing after 5 to 7 days?
- Does your wound keep coming back in the same location?

If you have experienced any of these issues, you should contact your healthcare provider or you can contact one of ProCare’s wound care clinics.