



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

**References:**

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# Venous Leg Ulcers

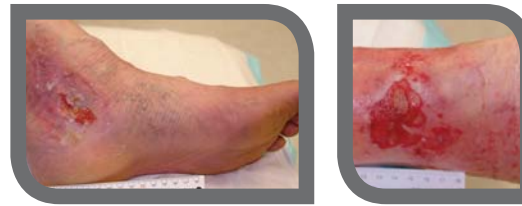
Information for health professionals



# 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**