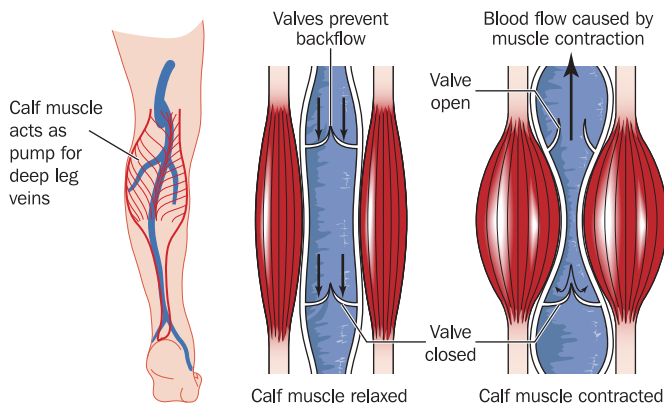


Venous Leg Ulcers

A venous leg ulcer is an open wound that is caused by venous insufficiency. Venous insufficiency can occur when the calf muscle is not working to pump the fluid out of your leg.



Your skin will slowly change in color as blood pools under the skin. In addition to swelling, you may also have:

- Pain
- Itching
- Discolored or hardened skin
- Heavy feeling in your leg
- Aching

DETECTION

Venous ulcers have features that make them different from other types of ulcers. To diagnose your leg ulcer, your doctor will do one or more of the following tests:

- Check for swelling
- Use a hand held Doppler to assess your pulses
- Order blood work, an ankle or toe brachial index, and/or a venous duplex doppler

Venous leg ulcers can also happen when the valves that control blood flow in your legs are damaged. Instead of pumping blood back to the heart, blood starts to pool in the legs, causing the legs to swell.

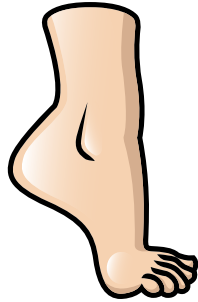
SYMPTOMS

One of the most common symptoms of venous insufficiency is edema, or swelling, of the lower leg. Edema can be very painful as the leg will swell and stretch, feeling like an inflated balloon.

TREATMENT

Your doctor and wound care team will work together to make a treatment plan. There are a variety of options based on the severity of your leg ulcer, where it is located, and any underlying conditions that you may have. Your treatment plan may include:

- Compression therapy
- Wound dressings
- Exercises
- Regular debridement
- Vein Ablation Therapy
- Surgery



Compression therapy uses wraps or stockings to put graduated pressure on the legs. The pressure will be the greatest at your foot and ankle and decrease as the wrap moves up your leg. They are designed to keep the swelling under control. Your doctor will prescribe the best type of wrap for your ulcer and lifestyle.



Walking is a great exercise to help blood flow. This will also help you maintain a healthy weight. Walking as little as 30 minutes a day can make a difference.

In addition to walking, you can also do tiptoe exercises. While standing, raise and lower your heel. This will help strengthen your calf muscles and move fluid out of your legs.

LIFESTYLE

Venous ulcers have a high recurrence rate. To help heal and prevent venous ulcers from coming back, there are a few lifestyle changes that you can make.

- Lose weight (if overweight) or maintain your current healthy weight
- Exercise
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Stop smoking
- Limit your alcohol intake
- Avoid standing for long periods of time
- WEAR YOUR COMPRESSION WRAPS/STOCKINGS

COMPLICATIONS

Even though venous ulcers are common, they are still very serious. Venous ulcers are also at a high risk for infection. Other complications include:

- Increased swelling
- Redness
- Increased wound drainage
- Increased pain
- Fever
- Foul smell from your wound

If you have any of these symptoms, call your wound treatment center right away.



Kristner, R.L., Shafritz, R., et al. (May 9, 2010) Emerging Treatment Options for Venous Ulceration in Today's Wound Care Practice. Retrieved on October 25, 2013 from <http://www.o-wm.com/content/emerging-treatment-options-venous-ulceration-today%E2%80%99s-wound-care-practice-0?page=0,0>

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