



Varicose Vein

Exercise and Care



Department of Health



Elderly Health Service

What is varicose vein?

Veins are vessels that bring blood back to the heart. There are valves inside the veins that prevent backflow of blood.

However, those valves could be damaged by prolonged pressure, which leads to stagnancy of venous blood. The veins would become dilated and tortuous, which are called varicose veins.

Common risk factors of varicose veins include prolonged standing, sitting, obesity and pregnancy. 30 to 40% of varicose veins are due to genetic factors.

Symptoms

Early Symptoms

- ◆ Dilated veins bulging under the skin
- ◆ Swelling sensation of the calves, which may easily fatigue or develop cramps

Late symptoms

- ◆ Veins become tortuous and swollen
- ◆ Ankle swelling after prolonged standing
- ◆ Skin colour turns dark or brown. Becomes itchy
- ◆ Prolonged wound healing
- ◆ Complications such as ulceration, bleeding or inflammation

Prevention and Care

Exercise may help prevent varicose veins or postpone its deterioration. You can practise the following exercises 3 times a day, for 10 repetitions every time.

Caution

1. Not suitable for those who have wounds, recent sprain injury, recent fracture or those who have severe osteoporosis.
2. Start gradually, avoiding movements that cause pain.
3. Stop and do stretching if your leg develops cramps during exercise.
4. If you have any discomfort, stop and seek medical advice immediately.

Sitting exercises

Sit on a chair with back support, use a stool to support your calf, or lift your leg to knee level so that your ankle can move freely.

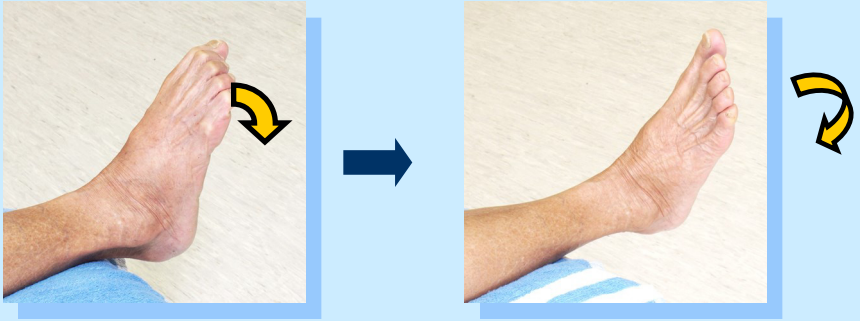
1. Move your ankle

- ◆ Flex your ankle upward, hold for 5 seconds.
- ◆ Flex downward and hold for another 5 seconds.
- ◆ Then relax.



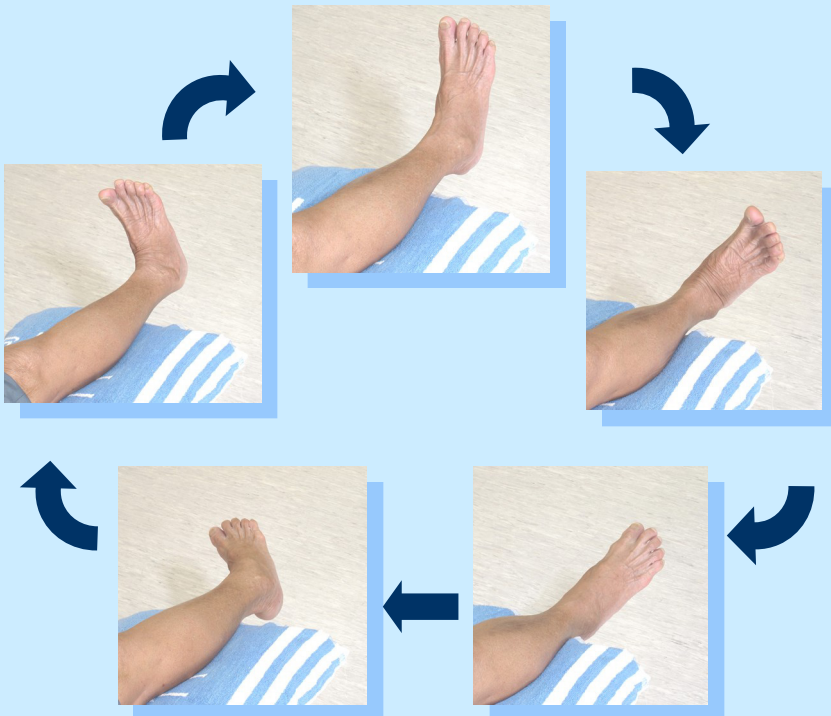
2. Move your toes

- ◆ Keep your ankle relaxed, flex your toes, hold for 5 seconds, then relax.



3. Turn your foot

- ◆ Turn your foot in clockwise direction, then anticlockwise.



Standing exercises

With your hands holding on stable furniture.

1. **Stand on tip-toe**

- ◆ Slowly raise your body until you stand on tip-toe.
- ◆ Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.



2. **Calf stretching**

- ◆ Lunge standing, keep your back straight, with both heels on the ground.
- ◆ Bend your front knee (but not beyond your toes) keep the hind knee straight until your calf is slightly stretched.
- ◆ Hold for 10 seconds, then relax.



Please consult a physiotherapist if you have queries.

Tips on Daily Activities

10:00 Sweeping
11:00 Rest(sitting)
11:30 Cooking

Posture and daily activities

1. Avoid prolonged standing or sitting, change your posture regularly to promote blood flow in the legs.
2. Take a short break and exercise your legs in between household tasks.
3. Elevate your legs to knee level while sitting (e.g. by using a stool to support), and avoid sitting with legs crossed.
4. Use a pillow to elevate your legs while sleeping to facilitate blood flow.
5. In case of long-distance travel, such as by air, exercise your legs regularly to promote blood flow back to the heart.



Tips on Exercise and Clothing

Exercise, shoes and clothing

1. Exercise your lower limbs regularly, e.g. walking, cycling, swimming or jogging.
2. Maintain ideal body weight, as obesity increases pressure on lower limbs and the risk of varicose veins.
3. Check skin condition regularly, apply moisturizer to dry skin to prevent injury from scratching.
4. Avoid wearing high heels which may easily tire the calf muscle.
5. Avoid tight trousers and socks, which could increase venous pressure.



Elastic Stocking and Pressure Garment

Elastic stocking or pressure garment applies graduated pressure on the lower limbs which enhances venous blood flow and helps to reduce lower limb swelling.

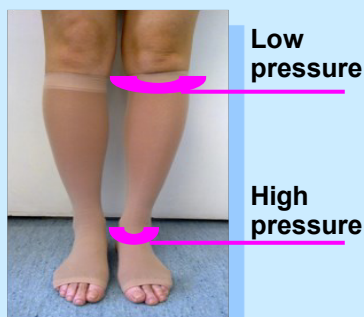
Caution:

1. The duration of application should be increased gradually starting with a short period of time to throughout the day. Pressure stocking should be not be worn while sleeping.
2. Avoid creases, which could impede venous blood flow.
3. Remove the stocking and seek medical advice if there is increased swelling, numbness, or bluish discolouration of the skin.

Elastic stocking and pressure garment should only be worn with advice from health professionals (e.g. doctor, physiotherapist or occupational therapist). Improper usage may induce complications or fail to achieve expected therapeutic effects



Elastic stocking



Pressure Garment

*Occupational therapists in the hospital can provide tailor-made pressure garments if indicated.

