How do I obtain compression garments?

- Your nurse will measure your legs and advise on the best support hosiery for you.
- Prescription hosiery is obtained by prescription from your GP or community nurse. You take your prescription to your local pharmacy to obtain the hosiery.
- Non-prescription garments will be ordered and provided by your specialist Wound Care or Lymphoedema nurse; this includes arm garments.
- You will need to be prescribed 2 garments for each limb requiring compression.

How often is hosiery renewed?

- Compression garments need to be replaced every 3 - 6 months. How often is dependent upon the type you have been provided with.
- The garments will also need reviewing if you notice:
  - an increase in limb swelling
  - your garment becoming too tight
  - your garment becoming too loose and not staying in place
  - your skin ulcerating

Contact the nurse who is involved in your care.

Garments can be washed daily or weekly.
Also see individual garment washing instructions.

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Washing instructions for your garment:

DO: Wash gently by hand or machine at 40°c

DO: Use delicate fabric detergent

DON'T: Dry in direct sunlight

DON'T: Iron

DON'T: Use biological detergent or fabric conditioner

DON'T: Expose to radiator / heat / sun

DON'T: Tumble dry

Contact: Accelerate CIC Wound Care Team
Days: Monday to Friday
Address: Mile End Hospital, Bancroft Road, London E1 4DG
Tel: 0208 223 8331
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partners in wound and lymphoedema care

Compression Garments

Using and caring for compression garments

Why do I need to wear compression hosiery garments?

- Special compression garments are used for:
  - managing leg or arm swelling
  - preventing or treating leg ulceration
- Garments work by compressing swollen limbs and preventing fluid from building up
- Wearing your compression garment daily is an essential part of managing chronic swelling

NOTE: Leg compression garments that are medically prescribed for you are stronger than those available in shops.

How long do I need to wear compression garments for?

- For most people, compression garments need to be used for life. Your community or specialist nurse can advise you further based on your underlying medical conditions
- To get the best results, you should wear your compression garments as directed and look after them according to the instructions

How to put on your compression garments

- Put your garment on in the morning and remove before going to bed at night, unless otherwise advised
- Because the garment material tends to be thicker it may not be practical to apply in the same way as a normal sock. Your community nurse will advise you of the best way to put on the garment
- For more application information refer to instructions in garment packet / box

Additional tips

- Avoid any wrinkles or creases in the garment, as they may cause too much pressure and therefore, dig in causing more swelling
- Take care to not pull so high that the top folds over
- Please note that the hosiery will be firm, but it should also be comfortable for you to wear. Garments are also available in different materials to suit individual requirements: some may therefore be firmer than others

Skin care

- Skin care, including washing and moisturising your skin regularly, is very important. How often you do this is dependent on the condition of your skin. Where possible, always moisturise your skin at night after removing your garment. The moisturiser will then be fully absorbed into your skin, making it easier to put your garment on
- If your skin is very dry a moisturiser should also be applied in the morning. It is important to keep your skin well hydrated
- Use a cream based moisturiser as ointments (paraffin based) can damage the garment

What if I have problems applying or removing my compression?

- If you have difficulty applying your garment, there is a selection of hosiery applicator aids available. Your specialist or community nurse can discuss what would be best for you
- Wearing rubber gloves (e.g dishwashing gloves) may be useful to help grip the garment and smooth out any wrinkles or creases
- If you are unable to apply or remove your compression garments, even with the help of applicator aids, you may need personal help. This may not be every day. If this is the case you may need to wear your hosiery at night. A plan for wearing the hosiery can also be arranged with your nurse and / or carer

What if I develop skin problems?

Look out for your skin developing the following: redness, hot patches, new pain or soreness, itching, weeping skin or new ulceration. If you notice these changes you may have developed a skin infection or allergy so please contact your nurse as soon as possible.

Possible problems and what to do

Compression garments should be comfortable, firm and supportive. If the garment causes tingling, numbness, pain or if you notice your fingers or toes turn blue, then the garment should be removed immediately, and advice sought from the person who gave you the garment.