

# Anti embolism stockings

Advice about wearing them while you are in hospital and after you leave

## Information for patients



Name:

Date of Birth:

Hospital No:

NHS No:

*Patient details  
or sticker*

**Ward / Unit:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ward / Unit telephone number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

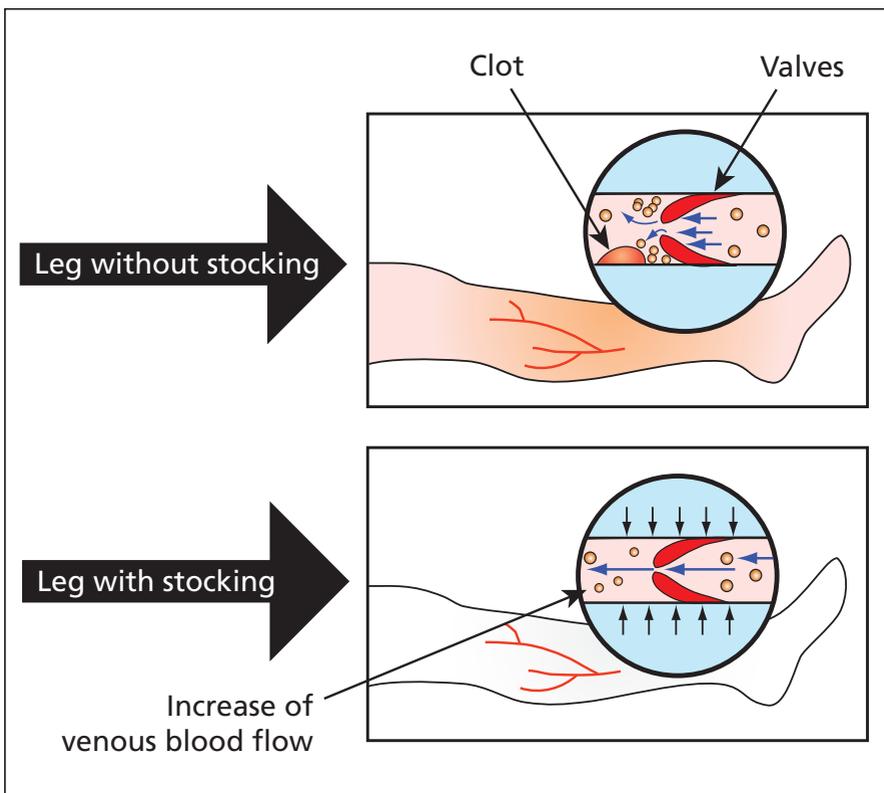
**Discharge date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## What are anti-embolism stockings?

Anti-embolism stockings are made with firm elastic, giving graduated compression to the leg from the ankle up to the knee or thigh. The stockings help to reduce the risk of you developing a blood clot, known as a deep vein thrombosis (DVT), in your legs.

## How do anti-embolism stockings work?

The stockings work by gently squeezing your legs which helps to maintain the normal speed of blood and prevents your leg veins from expanding. This helps to prevent blood pooling in your legs and forming a clot.



## **How long will I need to wear them?**

It is important that you wear your stockings until you are back to your usual day-to-day activities. Patients who have had certain operations or who have particular health conditions may need to wear them for longer. Your ward nurse will advise you about this.

## **Can I take my stockings off at bedtime?**

You should wear your stockings throughout the day and night. You will need to remove your stockings to allow you to have a bath, shower or wash. You will also need to check your skin daily for any damage, blistering or sore patches, particularly over bony areas. If you have swollen legs, poor skin or poor sensation in your legs you will need to check your skin more often.

**It is recommended that you do not leave your stockings off for longer than 30 minutes in a 24 hour period.**

## **How do I put my stockings on?**

You will have been issued with either knee or thigh length stockings. They can be difficult to put on if you try to put them on like an ordinary sock or stocking. Following the step by step instructions in the following diagrams will make it easier to put on your stockings.

## Putting your stockings on:

Do ask for help if you have difficulty putting your stockings on. A nurse/carer, a family member or a friend may be able to help you.

Please note, there is no left or right stocking, they will fit either leg.

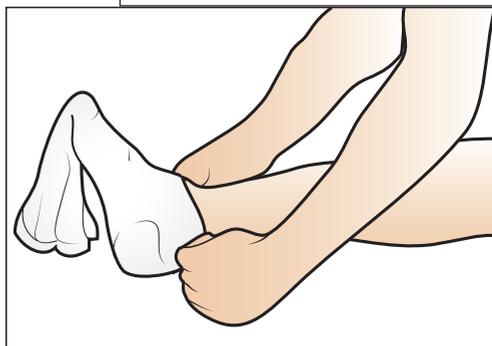
1. Put your hand inside the stocking as far as the heel pocket (the white square). Grasp the centre of the heel pocket.



2. Keeping hold of the heel pocket, turn the stocking inside out.



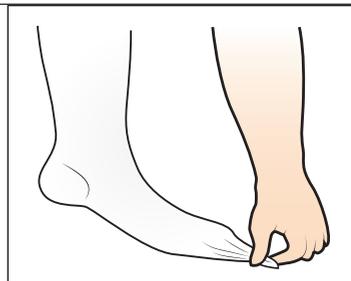
3. Put your foot in the opening you have just made and pull the stocking over your foot and heel. Make sure your heel sits squarely in the heel pocket.



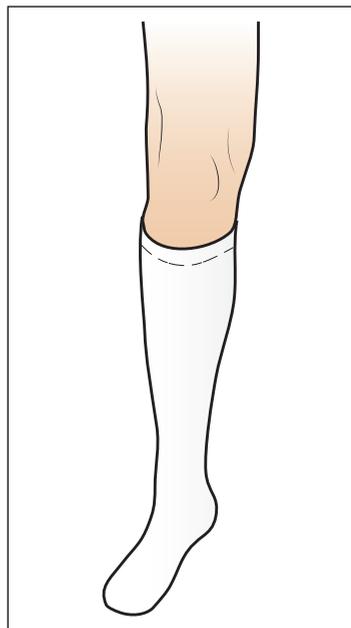
4. Ease the stocking up your leg.



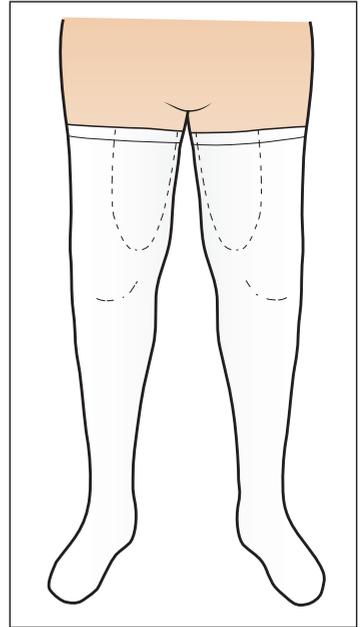
5. Smooth out any wrinkles and pull the toe section forward to smooth the ankle and instep areas. Make sure your toes are comfortable. The opening at the foot of the stocking should be underneath your toes, not around or above them.



6. The top of the knee length stockings should rest just below the knee.



7. If wearing thigh length stockings, the gusset should be positioned towards the inside of your thigh.



8. Finally, put on some comfortable non-slip footwear.



## What if my stockings feel too loose or too tight?

If your stockings are falling down or feel too loose ask your nurse to check that they fit correctly. Your legs may need to be re-measured for a new pair of stockings.

If you think your stockings are too tight you should check the circulation and feeling in your toes and feet. If you notice any of the following problems you should report them immediately to your nurse or family doctor:

- Blue, purple or white toes
- Cold toes
- Tingling or pins and needles in your toes
- Swelling of your toes
- Numbness in the foot or leg

You should **stop** wearing your stockings and report any of the following problems **immediately** to your nurse or family doctor:

- Pain or discomfort in your legs or feet
- Blistering or discolouration of your skin (especially over bony areas)
- Skin rash, redness or itching of the skin under your stockings

If your legs are swollen, they should be re-measured.

You should check your skin for any damage at least once a day and more often if you have swollen legs, poor skin condition or poor sensation in your legs.

## **How should I wash my stockings?**

Stockings should be washed every 3 days or sooner if they are dirty. Normal washing procedures can be used\*, up to a maximum temperature of 70° Celsius.

You should not use bleach in your wash while you are washing your stockings. Your stockings may be washed up to 30 times before they need to be replaced but you will not usually need to wear them for this long. Stockings can be tumble dried on a low setting over a period of about 15 to 20 minutes.

\*Please check the manufacturer's washing instructions for any special advice.

## **Further advice about your stockings**

1. Keep your stockings free from oily or greasy creams and moisturisers, these will damage the elastic fibres in the stockings. If you need to moisturise your legs use a water based emollient such as Diprobase cream.
2. Make sure your legs and feet are dry before putting your stockings on.
3. Do not wear your stockings rolled down or with wrinkles. Wearing them like this can form tight bands in the stocking material which may affect the circulation in your legs.
4. Wash your stockings at least every three days or sooner if they are dirty. Follow the recommended washing instructions.
5. Do not use your stockings if they are damaged or soiled beyond washing, or if you feel they no longer fit correctly.
6. Do not allow anyone else to use your stockings. They have been measured to fit you and can cause harm if used by the wrong person.

**Contact the ward or unit from where you were discharged if you have any questions or other concerns about wearing anti-embolism stockings.**

Remember, even whilst wearing your stockings it is still important to follow all the advice given to you about preventing a deep vein thrombosis.

Please refer to your booklet 'Preventing blood clots while you are in hospital and after you leave'

(<http://publicdocuments.sth.nhs.uk/pil1502.pdf>).

# Leg measurements for anti-embolism stockings

Legs should be re-measured and stocking size checked at the point of discharge / transfer of care.

Date of measurement ___ / ___ / ___	Below knee	Thigh length
<b>A</b> = From the heel to behind the knee	cm	N/A
<b>B</b> = From the heel to the base of the buttock	N/A	cm
<b>C</b> = Around the widest part of the calf	cm	cm
<b>D</b> = Around the widest part of the thigh	N/A	cm

>Type of stocking fitted (tick)

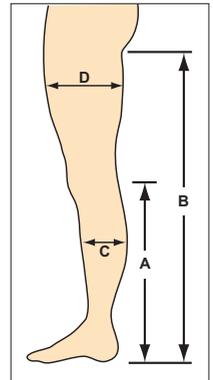
Below knee

Thigh length

Size of stocking fitted:

Right leg: \_\_\_\_\_

Left leg: \_\_\_\_\_



Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**You should wear your stockings** (tick):

Until you are back to your usual day to day activities

For \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

Until you are advised to remove them by your health care team

The patient has also received the STH booklet 'Preventing blood clots while you are in hospital and after you leave'.

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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