Compression Stockings

This handout will help you learn about your compression stockings, how to care for them and when to call a doctor or nurse with questions or problems. To view a video about putting these stockings on, please use the link to uwhealth.org on the last page.

- If you have any questions or problems with your stockings that are not answered in this handout, please call the clinic where you were fitted or your doctor.
- If any information in this handout is different from what your doctor has told you, please check with your doctor.
- If you were fitted at UW Health Care Direct CareWear or you would like more information, you may call one of the sites listed at the end of this handout to schedule a visit. During your visit, one of our CareWear staff members will review parts of this handout with you.

A Few Facts

Compression stockings help your veins work by putting mild pressure on your legs to decrease the swelling in them. The special knit of a compression stocking massages your veins, so they keep your blood moving back to your heart.

It is best to put on your stockings at the start of your day, before you even get out of bed. Legs are often less swollen at this time, so stockings go on easier. You should wear your stockings as long as you are able to during the day. Take them off before you go to bed (unless you have been told something else by your doctor or nurse).

When you lose or gain weight, you may need to be measured again. If your leg measures outside the size ranges, you may need to be measured for a custom stocking.

Compression stockings don't work well when they are worn out. If your stockings are stretched out or have large holes or tears, you should get new ones.

Medicare doesn't pay for most compression stockings, but there are some that are covered. This is because a few are ordered for certain diagnoses and compression levels that Medicare covers. If you have insurance, you may want to find out if it will help pay for your stockings.

Helpful Hints

- Stockings from UW Health Care Direct CareWear may be returned or exchanged for sizing problems or defects within 14 days of the date you receive them.
- Keep your nails short and take off your rings before putting on or taking off your stockings. This helps prevent runs or snags.
- Rubber gloves may help you hold onto your stockings when you put them on, adjust, or take them off.
- Dry your legs and feet before you put on your stockings. Wet legs and feet can make them stick.
- If needed, moisten your skin at night **after** you have taken off your stockings rather than in the morning. Oil-based creams, ointments, and petroleum products shorten the life of stockings. If you do put lotion on your legs before putting on your stockings, use a lotion that does **not** have an oil base.

How to Put on and Take Them Off

To put on one of your stockings, reach into one of them with your palm up and grab the fabric just above your heel. While holding this area, pull your arm out to turn the leg part of the stocking inside out until your thumb pops out.

Stretch the stocking as wide as you can and pull it over your foot and heel. Hook your heel and turn it right side out.

Release the fabric a little at a time, while you slowly pull your stocking up near your knee. Your heel should be in place. Smooth out wrinkles or creases. Be sure you have 1-2 fingers between bend of your knee and top of your stocking.

To take off a stocking, fold it down and keep going until it gets stuck, which often happens just above the ankle. Stick your thumb or finger like a shoehorn down the back of your stocking. Pop the stocking off your heel. Then slide the rest of the stocking off your foot.

More About Putting On and Wearing Them

- Be sure you do **not** put your stockings on by pulling them up by the top band. This may tear the fabric.
- Do **not** fold or roll the top band over on the top of your leg. This may slow blood flow and cause more swelling.
- Swab the silicone bands in thigh-high stockings once a week with rubbing alcohol to remove body oils and lint. This can help thigh-high stockings stay in place. A roll-on adhesive product called "It Stays" can also be used to help keep stockings in place.
- Adjust thigh-high or full-length stockings if you notice that part of a stocking is bunching behind your knee.
- Wear a loose-fitting stocking or sock over your stockings, if you wish.
- Be sure to take care of the foot part of your stockings by wearing socks, slippers, or shoes on your feet.

How to Wash Them

Compression stockings must be washed after every time they are worn. Acceptable soaps for compression stockings include Medi-Care Wash® or Jolastic Washing Solution® or you may use a small amount of laundry detergent that does not contain fabric softener or bleach.

Do **not** use chlorine bleach, fabric softeners, or delicates washing products such as Woolite® as these products can damage the elastic in the stockings. Do **not** dry clean.

Hand wash in warm water or machine wash on delicate cycle in a mesh bag. Warm water prevents a build-up of skin oils and maintains the fabric of the stockings so that they keep their shape and support. Rinse **well** with warm water.

Squeeze stockings to remove excess water. Do **not** roll in a terry cloth towel as the fibers from the towel can become stuck in the stocking fabric and break it down. You may use a lint-free kitchen towel or flour-sack towel for rolling. Do **not** wring or twist.

Hang your stockings to dry away from sunlight or direct heat. Do **not** machine dry, unless on "Air Dry" cycle.

Do **not** cut off the ends of any threads because this may unravel knots that are part of the stockings.

When to Call

- If you have any new or increased numbness, tingling, pain, redness, or swelling of your feet or legs while wearing your stockings.
- If you have any new open skin areas, drainage, or redness of your feet or legs at any time.

Who to Call

UW Health Care Direct CareWear
Middleton Office
1345 Deming Way
Middleton, WI 53562
(608) 262-2609
Fax: **608-833-3204**

UW Health E. Terrace Dr Medical Center
5249 East Terrace Drive
Madison, WI 53718
(608) 262-2609
Fax:**608-833-3204**

UW Health Care Direct experts have put together an instructional video titled “How to get the most out of compression stockings” that can be found on YouTube.
Please visit http://www.youtube.com/w atch?v=rdEL-bV4Xnc

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5362