

What does it take to heal and stay healed?

If your venous leg ulcer has healed, the key to staying healed is to continue with your care plan; skin care, exercise and elevation and compression therapy. Without this, especially compression, its likely your ulcer with return. Here we explain why.



If you have a venous leg ulcer, you may already have experienced recurrence. This is the term used for when your healed ulcer comes back. For people with venous leg ulcers, it is not uncommon for a cycle of healing and recurrence to occur. A recent study has shown that on average, people with venous ulcers have four recurrences over the course of their leg ulcer journey¹.

What causes recurrence?

Recurrence can occur for a number of reasons, but it is more likely to happen if you stop your care routine when your ulcer heals. While healing is a great outcome, underlying venous disease is still present. So it is easy to see why suddenly stopping with the care that has helped you to heal may cause the underlying problem to result in ulceration again.


The desire to stop with compression therapy in particular is understandable. Many people want to return 'to normal' when their wound is healed, which may mean disregarding their compression garment, to avoid being reminded of their ulcer.

Some people with venous leg ulceration report finding their compression therapy uncomfortable, or even painful, to wear. Others may find compression unsightly, or difficult to apply and remove. However, it is really important at this stage to remember that your ulcer has healed in no small part because of compression therapy.

This is because venous disease is a long-term problem with the veins in the leg that don't work as they should. Compression therapy works by supporting the veins, helping to improve the clearance of blood and fluid from the lower limb, improving its condition.

It is well known that people who continue to wear their compression after their venous leg ulcer has healed are less likely to experience a recurrence than if they no longer wear their compression.

As your leg health has changed, you may also want to change your compression to suit your new situation. Compression hosiery is commonly used to prevent recurrence, with a range of styles and colours available that you might find more acceptable than the garment you currently have. Hosiery applicators and compression wraps are also available, if you have difficulties with applying and removing hosiery. The key is to speak to your healthcare professional to find a solution that you feel you can wear in the long-term to help your leg ulcer to stay healed.

Remember too that exercising while wearing your compression helps your veins, and taking good care of your skin to keep it healthy will also help to reduce the likelihood of your wound coming back. 



Professor Keith Harding, Professor of Wound Healing, Cardiff, comments:

'The reasons for venous leg ulcer recurrence can be complex, but failing to continue to wear compression can be a big contributing factor. Compression therapy helps support the veins of the leg so healing can occur. Removing it when this happens means the veins are no longer functioning properly again, so it is only a matter of time until the wound returns.'