

Break free from the symptoms of your VLU

Wound symptoms such as pain and fluid leakage can affect all areas of your life if they aren't under control. However, don't despair, there are things you can do to help.



Having a leg ulcer can have a big impact on all aspects of your life: your career, social life and relationships, ability to complete daily activities and your mental health. It is well recognised that there are some issues, such as pain, the leakage of wound fluid (known as exudate) and odour that have a particularly detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. Here we discuss these issues in more detail and explain what can be done to overcome them.

Pain and discomfort

Pain or discomfort from a venous leg ulcer is a common problem and is often a

reason why people stop carrying out their daily ulcer care routine such as exercising and wearing compression. Unfortunately, this may lead to more pain in the long run so it is best to try and identify the cause and find a solution.

A sudden increase in pain from your wound, that is above your normal amount, could be a symptom of a wound infection. This type of pain may be accompanied by other symptoms such as heat, more wound fluid and redness, and on some occasions if the infection is spreading, feeling unwell. If you suspect an infection, you should contact your

healthcare professional urgently so that it can be treated as soon as possible.

Pain may also be associated with wearing compression, for example, if a compression garment fits, or bandaging is applied, poorly. This pain is often accompanied by marks on the skin caused by the bandaging or a garment, such as red marks from digging in. It is usually alleviated when the compression is removed.

Pain may arise from the limb and wound as a result of the underlying disease, and can be unbearable and constant. Whatever the cause, it is important that you don't accept pain as a part of your life, as there are solutions.

Speak to your clinician about resolving your pain and if it is compression related, explain that you want to wear your compression, but that pain is preventing you from doing so. They can also provide you with advice on pain management and present you with an alternative compression solution.

Sleep deprivation

Pain can also result in sleep deprivation and avoidance of activities that make it worse, such as standing and walking, all of which can have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing overall. Resolving your pain will help aid a restful sleep, but you can also try implementing a good sleep routine (having a set time and winding down) and trying to relax in the right sleep environment (quiet, dark and cool). Improving your diet and carrying

out physical exercise can help us to relax and get better sleep. Again, be sure to explain your concerns and the impact that sleep deprivation is having on you to your healthcare professional.

Wound fluid and leakage

Wound fluid or exudate is produced as part of normal wound healing. However, if there is too much of it, it can result in skin damage and lead to embarrassment as your clothes may become wet. If a wound produces too much exudate, it needs to be absorbed by a wound dressing that has the ability to soak up the exudate and keep it away from the skin and wound, even under compression.

A sudden increase in exudate can indicate infection or may be caused if you stop wearing your compression for any reason, as blood and fluid will begin to pool in your limb again, and may leak from your wound. Ask your healthcare professional to carry out an assessment to get to the cause so it can be resolved.

Malodour

If your venous leg ulcer smells unpleasant, try to identify the cause by speaking to your clinician. Wound odour is often caused by the presence of bacteria or dead tissue within the wound. Treatment is available to deal with both of these issues, and by doing so, the odour should be resolved.

It is important that you don't accept any of these symptoms as part of life with a venous leg ulcer, they can be resolved so seek help today.