Anti-embolism stockings
Your questions answered
What are anti-embolism stockings?

Anti-embolism stockings are elasticated stockings designed to minimise the risk of blood pooling in your legs whilst you are ill and less able to move around than normal. If blood was to pool in your leg it may then form a blood clot. This can then form a deep vein thrombosis (DVT), which is a potentially life threatening condition. Small clots or ‘emboli’ may break off from the blood clot and travel to your heart, lungs or brain. By wearing these stockings and having daily injections of dalteparin (a drug that reduces blood clotting), we can greatly reduce the risk of this occurring.

Does everyone need to wear these?

There are some people who are unable to wear these types of stocking. These are mainly people with vascular disease of their legs. If you have peripheral vascular disease or poor circulation in your lower legs and feet please make sure that your doctor and nurse are aware of this. Some people who have leg ulcers or wounds on their legs, especially if they are quite wet, may not be suitable for wearing these stockings.

Who is most at risk of a blood clot?

Blood clots can develop in people of all ages but if you are elderly, not able to move around easily, overweight, and if you have had a thrombosis in the past, you are at a higher risk of developing a clot. It is also more of a risk for women who are taking the contraception pill or HRT, people with cancer, people with heart disease, and pregnant women.
Do I have to wear them?

We strongly recommend that you wear these stockings. Blood clots are a significant cause of longer stays in hospital. More importantly, in some circumstances a blood clot can cause death, either in hospital or very shortly after discharge home. It can affect you, no matter what age you are or how fit and otherwise healthy you are. Simply wearing these stockings and having the daily injection reduces that risk enormously.

How long do I need to wear them for?

You will need to wear the anti-embolism stockings throughout your hospital stay. Once you go home you will no longer need to wear the stockings, unless you have been specifically prescribed them by your doctor. This is because people tend to move about more once they are back in their own home.

Can I take them off?

Anti-embolism stockings should be removed once a day so that you can bathe or have a wash. If you cannot take them off yourself (they are quite hard to remove and replace), then please ask your nurse to help you. It is really important that they are removed every day so that we can check your heels and make sure that they are not getting sore.

Do the stockings come in different sizes?

Yes. When you are admitted and get your first set of stockings the nurse will measure your legs so that you are fitted with the correct size stocking. The stocking will feel firm because it is elasticated, but it should not ‘cut in’ or pinch your skin. If it does appear to be too tight please let your nurse know. If your feet usually swell during the day the stockings should be fitted when your feet have been raised for at least half an hour.
What if the stocking is uncomfortable?

If the stocking is uncomfortable and starts to ‘cut in’ please do not roll it down or just put up with the discomfort. Tell your nurse and they will check your legs to see if the stocking just needs straightening or needs to be removed and your leg re-measured. The stocking is specifically elasticated; if you roll it down that elasticity is lost and the stocking just becomes a tight band around your leg, cutting off the blood supply. Therefore, it is very important that you tell us if you feel any discomfort from the stocking at all.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk

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