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Unitypoint.org/cardiologyclinic

Conservative Therapy

Limiting Skin Problems

Keeping skin moist helps prevent dryness and itching. Proper skin care also makes ulcers less likely to form. Apply lotion or emollients right after you bathe or shower.

Elevation Reduces Swelling

Elevation keeps blood from pooling in the leg veins. This lowers the pressures in the legs and reduces swelling.

- Raise your feet above heart level. This works if you lie flat on your back. You may want to use a few pillows or blankets to prop up your legs. Do this 3 to 4 times a day for 20 to 30 minutes.
- Put your feet up while you do sit-down tasks. Elevating at hip level doesn't reduce swelling, but it may help it from getting worse.

Maintaining a Healthy Weight and Diet

- Being overweight puts extra pressure on your veins. To maintain a healthy weight and improve symptoms, you may need to adjust your diet.
- Limit salty or processed and canned foods since they are likely to be high in sodium. Too much sodium causes your body to retain water and increase swelling.

Exercise Improves Blood Flow

Exercise helps promote blood flow from your legs back toward your heart. To get the most benefits:

- Spend time each day doing exercises that work the leg muscles. Walking, swimming, and cycling are great choices.
- If you're new to exercise, start out gradually and build up to 30 minutes on most days.
- If you have health problems that keep you from being active, ask your doctor for help.

Conservative Therapy

When Sitting or Standing

Sitting or standing for long periods can worsen symptoms and increase your risk of blood clots. To keep blood moving in these situations, do the following:

- Wear your compression stockings.
- Do foot or leg exercises every half hour to improve blood flow.

Daily exercise for your legs

- Sit on a chair breathing slowly; feet together, point your toes then let your heels down again. Repeat up to 20 times.
- While sitting, write the letters of the alphabet in the air with your toes.
- While standing, support yourself with your hands, breathing slowly. Stand tiptoe then lower yourself down again. Repeat up to 20 times.
- While standing, with one foot in front of the other facing the wall, support yourself against the wall with your hands at shoulder height. Stand tiptoe then lower yourself down again. Repeat up to 20 times.
- While standing with your feet apart and your arms hanging by your side; breathe out as you raise your arms and stand on tiptoe. Breathe in and return to a starting position. Repeat up to 20 times.

Exercise while lying in bed

- Lie on your back breathing slowly; point toes of one foot downward while the other is pointed upward, then alternate direction repeating this sequence up to 20 times.
- Lie on your back breathing slowly; press one foot hard against the foot board then alternate the other foot. Repeat up to 10 times.
- Lie on your back breathing slowly with arms at your sides; alternate legs, lifting one leg up high and then back down slowly to rest on the bed. Repeat up to 10 times.