

# Venous Leg Ulcers

A guide for patients and care givers

Venous leg ulcers are a difficult problem. They heal slowly and come back easily, causing considerable discomfort and frustration. The good news is, most venous leg ulcers can be healed, especially if patients understand and participate in their daily care plan. By consistently doing some basic self-care techniques prescribed by your health care professional, we can heal most venous leg ulcers and keep many of them from coming back.

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SAMPLE



*Venous leg ulcers happen to millions of men and women of all ages from all walks of life. If you have a leg ulcer or if you think you might have a blood flow problem in your legs, talk to your health care professional right away to*



A venous leg ulcer is often a shallow sore with an uneven border.

Venous leg ulcers usually occur on the inside of the lower leg, often near the ankle.

There may be swelling, drainage, and a reddish-brown color in the nearby skin.

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Most leg ulcers are caused by blood flow problems in the veins of the lower legs, so they're called venous leg ulcers.



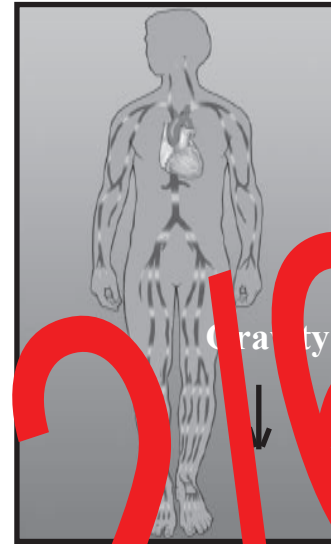
Diabetic foot ulcer

Diabetic foot ulcers and arterial ulcers are less common than venous leg ulcers. These wounds are treated differently.

# A miracle of nature

## *How the body moves blood from the legs back up to the heart.*

The ability to move blood against the force of gravity from the legs up to the heart is one of nature's miracles. The heart pumps fresh blood out to the body through arteries. Veins carry the used blood back to the heart. Down in the lower legs, the heart tries to pump blood up through the veins, but it's all uphill, and gravity pulls the blood right back down. That's not good, because pressure builds up in the veins.

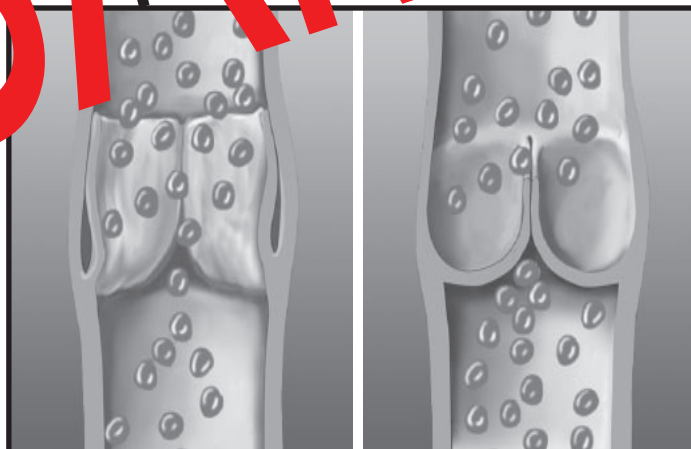


It's the job of the calf pump to help the heart with this heavy lifting. When we walk, the calf muscles squeeze the veins. Acting like a second heart, the force pushes blood up and out of the legs with every step.



This simple "heel lift" exercise exercises the calf pump.

Then, to keep blood from going backwards, these tiny one-way valves inside the veins let blood go up toward the heart, ...



... but flap shut so blood can't go the wrong way.