

THIS IS JUST ONE OF OUR SERIES OF HANDY DOWNLOADABLE LEAFLETS - LEGS MATTER OFFER A WEALTH OF EVIDENCED-BASED INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE AROUND THE HEALTH ADVICE ON LEG AND FOOT PROBLEMS.

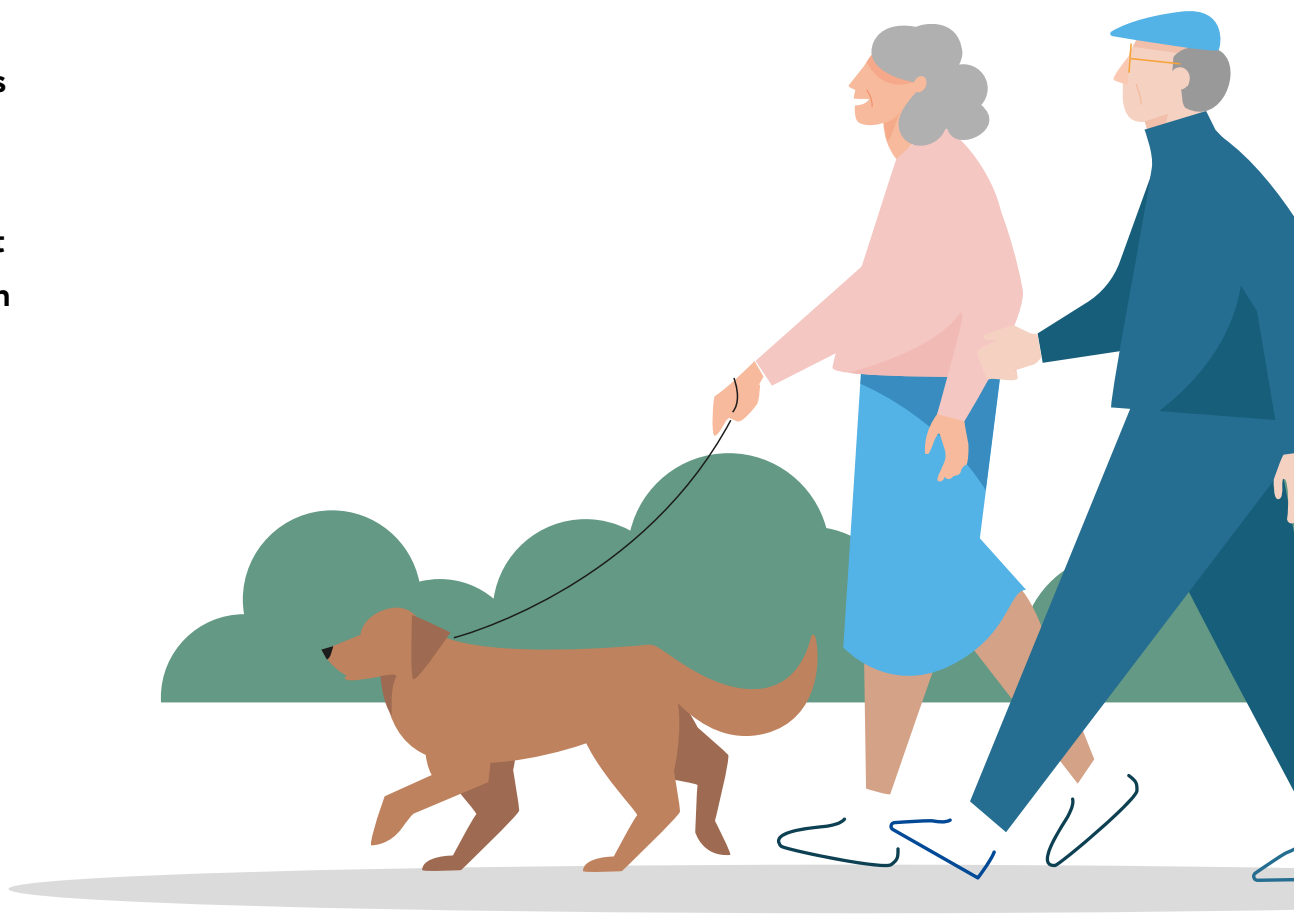
THIS LEAFLET IS TALKING ABOUT:

# Venous hypertension / insufficiency

Tired, throbbing and painful legs can be a sign of problems with our veins

## WHAT'S COVERED?

- Overview
- Symptoms
- Causes
- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- Prevention
- Outlook
- Harm



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[legsmatter.org](https://legsmatter.org)



# Let's talk about Venous hypertension / insufficiency

**Overview** – how venous hypertension / insufficiency can lead to having problems with leg ulcers

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Sometimes our legs get tired and ache. However, tired, throbbing, painful legs can be early signs of venous hypertension / insufficiency.

**Symptoms** – what are the key symptoms of venous hypertension

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You may experience heavy feeling in your legs, swelling, pain and tenderness. Some people also complain of restless legs and varicose veins.

**Causes** what can cause tired throbbing painful legs?

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**Venous hypertension / insufficiency can cause tired throbbing painful legs**

Tired, throbbing and painful legs might be connected to problems with the veins in our lower legs. Blood is pumped from our heart to the rest of our body through our arteries. It returns to our heart through our veins. Our blood is propelled back to our heart by our heart pumping and by our leg and foot muscles as we walk and move our ankles.

Our veins contain one-way valves to stop the blood falling back towards your toes. These valves can become weak or damaged. When this happens, our veins become so swollen (varicose veins) that blood is forced into the tissue of our skin making it swell. This can make our legs feel tired, throbbing and painful. You may notice that your ankles swell, especially in the evening. This is because blood is forced into the tissue of your skin.

**Diagnosis** – getting diagnosed with venous hypertension

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If your legs feel tired, throbbing and painful, make an appointment at your GP practice. You may be given an appointment to see the nurse rather than the doctor as nurses are often responsible for caring for patients with leg problems.

Alternatively, there might be a Leg Club or specialist leg clinic in your area. You don't need to be referred by your GP to visit these clinics.

**When you see the nurse or doctor, they should:**

- Ask about your symptoms and how long you have had problems
- Examine your lower legs

You may also be offered a simple test called an Ankle Brachial Pressure Index (ABPI). This test measures the blood pressure in your ankle and compares it to the pressure in your arm to see if you have problems with the arterial blood supply to your lower leg.

You might also be offered some further tests to check for other health problems that can affect your legs, such as diabetes and anaemia

If your GP practice thinks that your pain is caused by problems with your veins or arteries, they may refer you for further tests at your local hospital or specialist clinic.



## Treatment – what treatment will I be offered for venous hypertension?

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### Compression therapy (support bandages or socks)

If your pain is caused by venous insufficiency, and there are no problems with the arterial blood supply to your legs, then you must be offered compression therapy.

Compression therapy improves the venous blood supply back to the heart by applying pressure to the leg. This can be done by bandaging the lower leg or by wearing supportive socks, stockings or tights. Compression therapy is very effective at reducing swelling and healing or preventing sores or ulcers. There are lots of different types of compression therapy so ask your nurse to find something that is right for you. Compression can be a little uncomfortable when you first start treatment but any discomfort should reduce as the swelling goes down. You might find it helpful to take pain killers when you start compression therapy.

### Venous intervention

If your problems / symptoms are caused by venous hypertension there are simple interventions available on the NHS to treat the veins which are not working correctly, therefore, providing a permanent solution to your issues. If the issues are believed to be coming from your veins you should seek a referral through your GP / healthcare practitioner to your local vascular specialist team.

#### The most common vein treatment options available include:

- Endothermal ablation – where heat is used to seal up the affected veins
- Sclerotherapy – this uses special foam to close the veins
- Ligation and stripping – where the affected veins are surgically removed

### Healthcare advice for venous hypertension

#### Making healthy changes to your lifestyle can help reduce the symptoms of tired, throbbing, painful legs:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Take light to moderate exercise, such as swimming or walking for about 30 minutes at least three times a week
- Avoid standing for a long time
- Wear compression socks or tights instead of ordinary socks / tights

## Prevention – how to prevent venous hypertension

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#### There are several things you can do to avoid getting venous hypertension:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Take light to moderate exercise, such as swimming or walking for about 30 minutes at least three times a week
- Avoid standing for a long time
- Wear compression socks or tights instead of ordinary socks / tights

## Outlook – for venous hypertension

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It is important that you work together with your Nurse or health care provider to ensure you get the best outcomes from your treatment.

With compression hosiery and following the directions above the outlook is good

## Harm – the risk factors

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#### Inaction or insufficient action on venous hypertension can cause harm. This includes:

- Not performing a vascular assessment to determine if suitable for compression
- Not using compression if indicated can lead to worsening disease
- Not being referred to vascular services for venous intervention if indicated



## Find out more - some organisations you can contact for further information

### Accelerate

Based in East London, Accelerate can accept national referrals from your GP/specialist to our world-class centre where we pioneer and trial experimental new treatments for chronic leg ulcers/wounds, lymphoedema and mobility challenges.

#### Contact details

020 3819 6022

[hello@acceleratecic.com](mailto:hello@acceleratecic.com)

Find out more at [acceleratecic.org](http://acceleratecic.org)

### The Lindsay Leg Club

Foundation Promoting and supporting community based treatment, health promotion, education and ongoing care for people who are experiencing leg-related problems - including leg ulcers and other wound care issues.

#### Contact details

01473 749 565

[lynn.bullock@legclubfoundation.com](mailto:lynn.bullock@legclubfoundation.com)

Find out more at [legclub.org](http://legclub.org)

### The Circulation Foundation

The Circulation Foundation is the UK's only dedicated vascular charity. They fund and promote research into the causes, treatment and prevention of vascular disease.

#### Contact details

020 7205 7151

[info@circulationfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@circulationfoundation.org.uk)

Find out more at [circulationfoundation.org](http://circulationfoundation.org)

### NHS

The official NHS website, which provides vital information and support about leg and foot signs and other symptoms.

#### Contact details

Call 111 - for non-emergency medical advice

Find out more at [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)



The Legs Matter coalition is working together to increase awareness, understanding and prevent harm for lower leg and foot conditions

Help us spread the word about the #hiddenharmcrisis and we can all act to help tackle it.

You can help by following us on social media and sharing, reposting, liking and commenting - we are active on X, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

You can sign up for our newsletter at [legsmatter.org](http://legsmatter.org) and get all the latest information about our activities.

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