

Patient Glossary

You'll hear lots of confusing terms during your leg ulcer journey, from lymphoedema to cellulitis. This factsheet covers a few of the common terms you'll read about, or hear your doctors and nurses talk about.



Arterial or artery

Blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the body's tissues. Arterial conditions involve problems with these blood vessels, such as narrowing or blockages, which can restrict blood flow and affect the oxygen supply to the tissues.

Bacteria

Tiny microorganisms, some of which can cause infections in the body. While some bacteria are harmless or even beneficial, others can lead to illnesses and infections that require medical treatment.

Calf pump

The contraction and relaxation of the calf muscles help propel blood through the veins back to the heart and promote efficient circulation.

Cellulitis

A bacterial skin infection that can cause redness, warmth, swelling, and pain. It usually occurs when bacteria enter the skin through a cut, scrape, or other openings. Cellulitis requires medical treatment with antibiotics.

Chronic

A health condition or disease that lasts for a long time. It is ongoing and may require continuous management or treatment to control symptoms and prevent complications.

Compression

The application of pressure, using specialised bandages or stockings, to improve blood flow in the veins of the legs. Compression therapy can help reduce swelling, improve circulation, and aid in the healing of leg ulcers.

Doppler

A diagnostic tool called a Doppler ultrasound, which uses sound waves to evaluate blood flow in the veins and arteries. It helps healthcare professionals assess the blood circulation and identify any abnormalities or blockages.

Eczema

A chronic skin condition characterized by red, itchy, and inflamed patches of skin.

Holistic

An approach that considers the whole person, including physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects of health.

Inflammatory

A response by the body's immune system to fight off potential threats, such as infections or injuries. Involves redness, swelling, heat, and sometimes pain as the body's defence mechanism.

Lymphatic system

A network of vessels, tissues, and organs that help remove waste products, toxins, and excess fluid from the body. It also plays a vital role in supporting the immune system's function and defending against infections.

Lymphoedema

A condition where fluid builds up and causes swelling in a specific part of the body, like the arms or legs, because the drainage system called the lymphatic system is not working properly.

Leg ulcer

An open sore or wound that doesn't heal properly. It can be caused by poor circulation, damage to the skin, or other underlying health conditions. Leg ulcers can be painful and may require medical attention to promote healing.

Oedema

A condition where excess fluid collects and causes swelling in different parts of the body, such as the legs, ankles, or hands. It can happen when the body retains more fluid than usual or when there is an issue with the circulation or drainage of fluids.

Valves

Tiny structures within blood vessels (veins) that help prevent backward flow of blood. They ensure that blood flows in one direction towards the heart and prevents pooling in the legs.

Venous or veins

Blood vessels that carry blood back to the heart. Venous conditions or problems typically involve issues with the veins, such as blockages or weakened valves, which can lead to poor blood flow.

Venous insufficiency

A condition where the veins in the legs have difficulty returning blood to the heart effectively. It can cause blood to pool in the legs, leading to symptoms like swelling, pain, and the formation of leg ulcers.

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