Patient Information Leaflet; Anti-embolism Stockings.

**Why should I wear stockings?**

These stockings are designed to reduce the risk of blood clots (deep vein thrombosis) in the legs at times when you are a higher risk of blood clots, such as undergoing an operation.

**How do they work?**

They work by providing firm elastic compression to the legs. The effect of the compression reduces both ‘pooling’ of blood in the veins and damage to the vein wall which can contribute to the formation of blood clots.

**Who should wear them?**

Surgical patients appear to benefit most from the use of stockings. Some patients will only be offered stockings if they are unable to have other blood clot prevention methods.

Some patients should not wear stockings as they may cause complications. Your doctor or nurse should check your medical history and the condition of your legs to make sure it is safe for you to wear them.

**When should they be worn?**

You should wear the stockings day and night, before, during and after your operation, or from admission (if you are not having an operation) until you are back to your usual levels of mobility. If you remove the stockings for bathing then reapply them as soon as possible afterwards.

**How will I know which stockings to wear?**

The choice of which stockings you should wear depends on many factors; the main ones are your leg size and personal preference. Your legs will be measured to find out which size is right for you and you may need to be re-measured at times during your hospital stay if the size of your leg(s) changes, for instance, if you get leg swelling after leg surgery.
Thigh-length stockings offer good protection against blood clots in surgical patients; however, your personal preference will be taken into account when choosing whether to wear thigh-length or knee-length stockings.

**How should I apply them?**

Place your hand inside the stocking and grasp the heel. Turn the stocking inside out whilst keeping hold of the heel. Put your foot inside the stocking making sure the heel is in the correct position. The toe hole should be placed under the foot. Pull the top of the stocking back over the heel and up the leg ensuring there are no wrinkles. If wearing a thigh length stocking, ensure the gusset of the stocking is placed between the top and inside of your thigh. If you are unable to apply the stockings yourself then ask your nurse to assist you. There may be devices available on the ward to help with application and if so please follow the manufacturer’s instructions on their safe use.

**What should I do if they are uncomfortable?**

Check that the stockings are correctly fitted. Ask to be re-measured to check that you are still wearing the correct size of stocking as after operations patients may develop leg swelling and you may even need different sizes on each leg. Ask your nurse to check your legs for signs of complications from wearing the stockings and report any new symptoms you develop whilst wearing them.

**How should I care for them?**

You may be given two pairs of stockings, one pair to wash and one pair to wear. You can wash them daily, by hand or in a machine, at a temperature no higher than 40°C. Do not wash with bleach and do not dry in a tumble dryer as this may damage the material in the stockings. Make sure the stockings are dry before you wear them. If you are applying any creams or ointments to your legs, ensure they are absorbed fully before putting on the stockings again as they may also damage the material.

**What do I need to be aware of whilst wearing them?**

Always wear the stockings correctly. Do not leave them rolled down or poke your toes out the toe hole as this may cause complications. Report any new symptoms immediately especially if you develop a rash which could suggest an allergy to the material in the stockings, or if you develop any numbness, pins or needles, coldness or pain in your legs or feet. You should remove the stockings every day to bathe your legs and feet, and wash the stockings. Whilst they are removed, check your skin for signs of redness, blisters or any other marks, especially around your heel or bony areas. Report any of these signs to your nurse or doctor as they may be indications of the start of
complications. If you are at higher risk of complications due to loss of sensation in your legs or your skin is in poor condition then more frequent checks of your skin are necessary. Ask your nurse to assist with this if necessary.

**Where do I find more information?**

Your nurse or doctor will answer any further questions you may have regarding the safe use of these stockings.

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