



Nanaimo

Division of Family Practice

A GPSC initiative

WOUND CARE PATIENT SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

YOUR GUIDE TO WOUND CARE

ARTERIAL LEG ULCERS

THE PROGRAM

This booklet will help you

- Manage your wound at home
- Improve and maintain your health and quality of life
- Prevent new wounds.

You can use this booklet and the accompanying passport to:

- Keep track of information about your care
- Guide your day-to-day wound care
- Know when you need to call your GP, Home Care Nurse and/or Specialist
- Ensure that your wound is being managed in the best way possible

Your team looks forward to working with
YOU to Heal/Take Control of Your Wound.



You have developed some personal goals, and your passport is your tool to keeping track of them, and of your care, as you begin managing your wound at home.

To heal your wound you will need to take care of yourself and pay attention to your body, but it does not mean you need to stop doing the things you love to do, and this booklet is here to help!

Keep this booklet and your passport nearby, in a convenient spot, so you can refer to them and make notes about your healing journey. It helps to know a bit more about your particular wound.

ARTERIAL LEG ULCERS

You have an arterial leg ulcer, which is caused by poor blood supply to the wound area. Some arterial leg ulcers are not heal-able; your care plan will reflect the goal of care.

Your arterial system supplies oxygen and nutrient rich blood from your heart and lungs to your entire body. If you have poor circulation because of arterial disease (which can have many causes), your legs and feet are starved of oxygen and nutrients and the body cannot heal wounds in a normal way. You may have cramping your legs as you walk. You may also experience cramping or pain in your legs at night; if this occurs, let your legs hang down.

How did this happen to me?

- Diabetes mellitus
- High blood pressure
- Trauma
- Increased age
- Genetics
- Thickening of the arteries, due to the buildup of fatty materials
- Restrictions to blood vessels (peripheral vascular disease)
- Renal failure
- Hardening of the arteries
- Limited joint mobility
- Smoking

HOW TO HELP HEAL

Knowing what caused your arterial ulcer will help you manage your wound and prevent future venous ulcers. In order to be YOUR healthiest, you should:

- 1. Exercise Daily.** Walking helps your arterial ulcer by increasing circulation to your legs and feet. Your nurse or physical therapist can help create an exercise plan with you.
- 2. Check your feet and legs daily for signs of ulcers.** Protect your legs and feet from injury. Avoid socks & shoes that are tight.
- 3. Keep your legs below your heart to help gravity deliver blood to the legs and feet. This help relieve pain. When sitting, make sure the circulation is not cut off from behind your knees.**
- 4. If you are diabetic, monitor and control your sugars.** Your nurse can help you learn to do this.
- 5. Eat a balanced diet,** high in protein, which keeps your skin strong and helps wounds heal.
- 6. If you smoke, QUIT!** It's bad for blood flow, your skin, and your body. Your team will talk to you about options that will help you kick the habit! It's truly one of the best things you can do for your body at any age. Visit www.quitnow.ca for more information.

CARING FOR YOUR WOUND

Here are the steps you'll need to take to properly care for your wound:

PREPARE

- Get your supplies together and clean a work surface with plenty of room

WASH HANDS

- Remove all jewelry and point hands down, under warm water
- Add soap and wash for 15 to 30 seconds, cleaning under your nails
- Rinse and dry well with a clean towel

REMOVING DRESSING

- Carefully loosen the dressing and pull off gently
- If the dressing sticks, soak it off with saline
- Put old dressing in a plastic bag and set aside
- Wash your hands AGAIN

INSPECT

- Inspect wound for any drainage, redness, pain or swelling

CLEAN WOUND

- Fill the syringe with recommended fluid
- Hold 3 to 4 inches away from the wound and spray gently
- Use soft, dry cloth or piece of gauze to pat the wound dry
- Ask physician / health care provider if showering permitted

APPLY DRESSING

- Place and secure the clean dressing onto your wound
- Do not apply a tight wrap/bandage around your leg, as it may further decrease blood flow
- **Remember, use a dressing only ONCE, and never reuse**

FINISH

- Apply compression if directed by your nurse
- Throw used supplies into waterproof, tightly closed, double plastic bag
- Wash your hands AGAIN
- Wash any soiled laundry separately

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

Your wound will change throughout the healing process. Changing your dressing gives you a chance to take a closer look at your wound.

Call your nurse if you see the following changes:

- More redness, pain, swelling, or bleeding
- The wound is larger or deeper
- The wound looks dried out or dark
- The drainage coming from the wound is increasing
- The drainage coming from the wound changes or smells bad
- Your temperature is above 100 °F (37.8 °C) for more than 2 hours

RED FLAGS

IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE, CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IMMEDIATELY!

- Your temperature is above 100 °F (37.8 °C) for more than 4 hours
- You have difficulty breathing
- You feel confused
- You have fever, chills, or light-headedness
- Your wound is bleeding and does NOT stop

HOW DO I KNOW MY WOUND IS HEALING?

Here are a few scenarios that will help you to judge how your healing is progressing:

Your wound may look very similar to the last dressing change. There is no redness, inflammation, pain, bleeding and the discharge looks the same. Your wound may look smaller and the discharge may be less.

SAFE! Your wound is healthy.

Your wound looks larger or deeper. There is some redness and it looks swollen. There is no bleeding but the discharge is different, or this is more than usual.

CAUTION! Your wound may be in trouble, call your nurse.

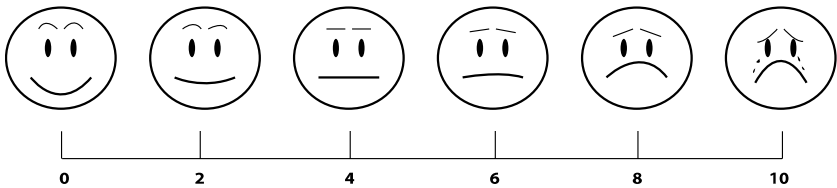
Your wound looks much larger or deeper. There is redness, welling, and bleeding that isn't stopping. The discharge is very different or there is much more of it. You have pain and a fever.

DANGER! Call your nurse or follow up with your primary care provider. If there is an emergency, call 911.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Please note the following daily activities

- Check your dressing daily. Ensure your dressing is dry and intact.
- Check to see if a dressing change is required.
- Assess your wound for any changes daily or with each dressing change.
- Eat three meals a day based on Canada's Food Guide.
- Assess how you generally feel today.
- Follow your exercise plan.
- Assess your pain level. The scale below may help you to assess your pain level. You may review this with your nurse at appointments.



MY DRESSING CHANGE

Keep the following list handy and use it to help you remember the types of dressings you will use for your wound and when to change your dressings.

I CHANGE MY DRESSINGS (i.e. daily, weekly, etc.): _____

I CLEAN MY WOUND WITH: _____

THE 1ST DRESSING I APPLY: _____

THE 2ND DRESSING I APPLY: _____

THE 3RD DRESSING I APPLY: _____

I WILL CALL MY NURSE: _____

IF MY DRESSING LEAKS: _____



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