

## **Venous Stasis and Venous Stasis Ulcers**

### **What is venous stasis?**

Venous stasis is a disease of the leg veins. It is also called chronic venous stasis. Normally, blood flows from the veins near the surface of your legs into the deep veins, then up to the heart and lungs. Veins also have one-way valves inside them that help the blood flow back to the heart. In people who have venous stasis problems, these valves are weak and do not work correctly. Some people are born without these valves. Valve problems cause the blood to stay in the leg veins under lots of pressure. This can cause:

- Edema (swelling) of the legs or ankles
- Skin changes (darkening, dryness, rashes, fragile thin skin or very thick skin)
- Pain and/or itching in the legs
- Ulcers (wounds) that do not heal and infections
- Varicose veins (large twisted leg veins)

### **Why do I have it?**

Venous stasis is a very common disease. Weak valves in the vein walls can be hereditary. They can also be caused by vein injury or disease (such as a blood clot in the leg), obesity, being older, smoking or pregnancy. If you are not active or if you stand a lot, you may get venous stasis.

### **What is a venous stasis ulcer?**

A venous stasis ulcer is a leg wound that does not heal because of poor blood flow in the veins. Your wound may have started because you hit or scratched yourself. Because of the venous stasis, the wound does not heal as it usually would. Instead, it gets larger and may become infected.

### **Will my wound heal?**

Venous stasis ulcers that have lasted less than one year almost always close completely. Ulcers that have been there longer than a year may not close completely. But, they will get smaller in size.

The process of healing will take many months. You may need surgery to help your wound heal. Healing may be slower if you have blockages in your arteries or osteomyelitis (bone infection).

### **Is there anything I can do to prevent ulcers?**

There is no way to completely prevent venous stasis ulcers. You can help yourself by doing the following:

- Exercise regularly. This can be as simple as walking a few extra blocks or climbing a flight of stairs a day! Do check with your doctor before you start any exercise program.
- Eat a well-balanced diet to control your weight.
- Elevate your legs when sitting.
- Avoid tight clothing.
- Change your position when you stand or sit for a long time.

- Wear any support socks or stocking that your doctor has ordered.

Surgeries that close or remove superficial veins can make it less likely that you will get other ulcers. You can talk about these surgeries with a vascular surgeon.

If you do get a new wound, you can make a big difference by telling your doctor about it **immediately**. The wound will heal better if it is treated early.

**What do I do if I have a question?**

If you are confused or have a question about your venous stasis ulcer, please call us at 212.932.4325, at any time. You can also find information at our website: [www.ColumbiaWoundHealing.org](http://www.ColumbiaWoundHealing.org).

This information is brief and general. It should not be the only source of your information on this health care topic. It is not to be used or relied on for diagnosis or treatment. It does not take the place of instructions from your doctor. Talk to your health care providers before making a health care decision.