

## Patient information factsheet

# Anti-embolism stockings (AES)

**This factsheet contains important information about why you are wearing anti-embolism stockings (AES) and how to wear and care for them safely.**

Anti-embolism stockings are made from elastic and can be either thigh or knee length. They reduce the risk of blood clots by gently compressing your legs. This increases the blood flow and prevents your leg veins from expanding, which stops blood pooling in your legs and forming a clot.

### Wearing the stockings

- It is important that your legs are measured accurately using a fitting chart before applying stockings. This should be done by an appropriately trained member of the nursing team.
- If the size of your leg changes, or the stockings become uncomfortable, your leg should be re-measured and the need for stockings reviewed.
- The stockings should be worn day and night during your stay in hospital. At home, you should wear them until you return to your normal or improved level of mobility. When you are discharged, your nurse will give you further advice on this.
- Stockings should be removed for no longer than 30 minutes every day. Your legs should be washed and inspected for damage and skin discolouration or soreness.
- Stockings should be changed and washed every two to three days and a fresh pair applied.
- Do not allow your stockings to roll down as this will create a tight band causing constriction and affect your blood flow.
- Avoid using greasy ointments, oils and lanolins on your skin as this damages the stockings' elastic fibres.
- When moving around, please make sure you are wearing slippers or shoes as the stockings can be very slippery on hard floors.
- The stockings can be difficult to put on. Therefore, the elderly and people with a disability may need some help from a carer or relative.

### How to put the stockings on

- Insert your hand into the stocking as far as the heel.
- Keeping your hand inside, turn the stocking inside-out to the heel.
- Position the stocking over the foot. Ensure the heel is centred in the heel pocket marked on the stocking. Providing the heel fits, the inspection hole will be under the foot. In some cases, the stocking overlaps the foot, and this is acceptable. (The most important thing is that the heel square is in the right place - if a bit of the stocking overhangs the toes, it can be tucked into your slipper).
- Pull the stocking up and fit around the ankle and calf.
- Pull the remaining stocking up to its full length and ensure there are no wrinkles.
- For full-length stockings, ensure the stocking fits to allow the knee to bend and the thigh gusset sits in the middle, on the inside thigh.

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## Washing instructions

- The stockings should be washed every two to three days.
- They can be washed with a mixed load of white garments on a standard 40° wash cycle.
- Don't use bleach to clean your stockings.
- Stockings may be spun in a short spin cycle, but should not be wrung out by hand as this can damage the elastic fibres.
- Dry at room temperature or tumble dry at a low to moderate heat.
- The stockings should not be hung over the radiator to dry.

With correct care, stockings should last two to three months (approximately 30 washes).

## What to do if you have any problems or discomfort

Contact us using the details below if you have any of the following symptoms:

- your leg becomes hard, hot, swollen or tender
- you have any marking, blistering or discolouration over the heels and bony prominences (bony parts) of your foot.

## Further information

If you require any further information, or have any queries about your stockings, please ask the nurse or doctor looking after you.

## Contact us

Anticoagulation and thrombosis nurse specialist telephone: **023 8120 6269**.

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