

Although [chronic vein disease](#) is a lifelong condition that cannot be completely cured, many effective [treatments](#) are available to relieve your symptoms and reduce your risk of complications. The most important thing you can do is work with your doctor to develop and carry out a treatment plan, including lifestyle changes and medications to control your vein disease risk factors.

This section discusses additional things you can do minimize the symptoms of chronic vein disease and prevent common problems such as leg ulcers, pain, and swelling.

- [Stay active](#)
- [Tips to manage symptoms](#)
- [Practice proper skin care](#)
- [Watch for blood clot symptoms](#)

See [Preventing DVT: The Basics](#) for tips on preventing blood clots in the veins for women at risk, including women with chronic vein disease.

Stay Active

Getting plenty of physical activity is crucial to keep blood flowing through the veins and help control symptoms such as swelling and pain. Regular exercise also helps other treatments for vein disease be more effective. Here are some ways women with chronic vein disease can stay active:

- Simply walking helps maintain muscle strength and improves the veins' ability to pump blood out of the legs. You should aim for 3 to 4 walks of 30 minutes or more each day, but any amount of walking is better than none. Make sure to wear your compression stockings and comfortable shoes and socks, and choose loose clothing that does not pinch or bind.
- Swimming or walking in water are also great exercise. Water-based exercise may be easier to tolerate for some women because the pressure of the water squeezes the veins just like [compression stockings](#), but may be more comfortable and less binding.
- Ask your doctor about calf muscle and ankle exercises you can perform at home.

Strengthening the calf muscle helps pump blood out of your legs, preventing swelling and pain.

Although the early stages of chronic vein disease do not usually interfere with your ability to exercise, women with more severe vein disease may find it difficult to exercise because of painful symptoms. If walking or other mild physical activity is difficult for you, ask your doctor to suggest other ways you can stay active while keeping in mind your limitations.

Tell your doctor if you have increased swelling or pain during or after exercise. This can be caused by blockages that prevent blood from leaving your legs. Treating these blockages may enable you to get the exercise you need with less pain.

Tips to Manage Symptoms

In addition to [treatments](#) to improve blood flow in the veins, here are some things you can do at home to help control your symptoms:

- Wear your prescription [compression stockings](#) daily. Make sure you are wearing the right size and strength of stocking, and that they do not pinch or bind at the top. See [wearing compression stockings](#) for more tips.
- Avoid prolonged standing or sitting, and hot baths
- Elevate your feet above your thighs while sitting, and above your heart when lying down. You should try to put your legs up at least 3 times a day for 30 minutes each time.
- Raising the foot of your bed by 4 to 6 inches with bed blocks can help blood flow out of the legs and back to the heart, reducing nighttime pain and swelling.
- Use a warm washcloth to apply moist heat a few times each day. This can help reduce pain and swelling.
- Ask your doctor which pain relievers are safe for you to take. Aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen, and other NSAIDs (*non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs*) can help control leg pain. Notify your doctor if you need more medication than usual to control your pain.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks, and avoid clothing that is tight around your waist, thighs, or legs. You should still wear compression stockings as prescribed.

- Talk to your doctor about an [exercise plan](#) to maintain walking ability and relieve your symptoms
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Skin Care

Because women with chronic vein disease often suffer from skin problems such as rashes and painful ulcers (sores) on the legs, proper skin care is extremely important.

- Check your legs and feet every day, including the tops, bottom, and sides of your feet and the backs of your legs. Use a mirror or ask a family member for help checking hard-to-see areas. Look for:
 - Ulcers (open sores), often between the lower calf and ankle
 - Open wounds or cuts
 - Itchy, scaly, or discolored skin
 - Tender, irritated, or painful areas
 - New or worsening leg or foot swelling
- Call your doctor right away if you notice any leg or foot problems. Do not wait to see if they go away, and do not try to treat them yourself.
 - Wash your feet daily with warm (not hot) water and mild soap and dry them thoroughly before getting dressed. Keep your legs and feet well moisturized, but do not use moisturizer between the toes because this can increase the risk of a fungal infection (athlete's foot).
 - Always wear comfortable shoes that fit well. Avoid shoes and clothing that rub your feet or legs, or are tight enough to leave marks on your skin when you take them off. When you get new shoes, break them in gradually, and do not wear them all day.
 - Make sure your healthcare provider checks your feet at every office visit. You should have a leg and foot exam at least once a year, or more often if you already have skin problems.

Talking to your doctor immediately about any skin problems or wounds is very important—without treatment they can spread and become infected, sometimes requiring amputation. Nearly all leg ulcers will heal in a few weeks with proper treatment. Compression stockings, compression bandages, and steroid creams can help wounds heal and prevent ulcers from spreading.

Watch for Blood Clot Symptoms

Because women with chronic vein disease are at increased risk for blood clots in the veins, make sure you know how to recognize the [symptoms of DVT and pulmonary embolism](#) . Call 9-1-1 if you have:

- New or worsening swelling in one leg or along a vein in the leg
- New or worsening pain or tenderness in one leg (may only appear when standing or walking)
- Warmth, redness, or discolored skin
- Unexplained shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Rapid heartbeat, sweating, and/or sharp chest pain, especially during deep breathing
- Dizziness, fainting, or coughing up blood

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