

# Compression hosiery and socks

How to choose the right product for every patient need.



**Make  
compression  
easy**





## Help patients choose the right compression product

**Nearly one in five older US adults have lower limb edema.<sup>1</sup>** Chronic edema (CE) is an umbrella term that's used to describe swelling that has been present for three months or more. Edema is caused by excess fluid trapped in the body's tissues. Although edema can affect any part of the body, you may notice it more in the hands, arms, feet, ankles and legs.

One of the key approaches in the management of CE is compression. Compression hosiery is specifically designed to apply pressure to lower legs to help maintain blood flow and reduce discomfort and swelling.

**If left untreated, any form of CE can result in progressive swelling, skin changes, psychosocial morbidity, and an increased risk of cellulitis.<sup>2</sup>**

Choosing the right compression product for your patients is crucial to its effectiveness for reducing the symptoms of CE, improving compliance and, ultimately, the patient experience. This guide is intended to help healthcare providers and patients choose the right product, including how to determine the right size, level of compression and type of garment, to best treat the specific problem.

# Why use compression hosiery—and what kinds are there?

## Compression hosiery helps prevent chronic edema (CE)

CE occurs when a damaged or poorly closing valve in a vein of the leg allows blood to flow backwards. This can cause blood to back up and collect in the veins of the lower leg. This causes swelling, especially near the ankles and calves, which can lead to complications such as enlarged veins, blood clots (also called deep vein thrombosis—DVT), swelling, chronic venous insufficiency (CVI) and venous ulcers.

**Gradient compression stockings help return blood to the heart by compressing (squeezing) the leg muscles.** Gently squeezing the veins helps to push blood in the right direction. “Gradient compression” means that the amount of compression in the stocking gradually changes—the highest amount of pressure occurs at the ankle and gradually decreases up the length of the stocking.

## What's the difference between compression socks and compression stockings/hosiery?

Compression socks are also referred to as compression stockings or compression hose.<sup>3</sup> **The main difference between the two is based on the design and the material used in the design.** Functionally, they work in the same way and there are no differences in the pressure rating for compression socks or compression stockings.<sup>4,5</sup>

## What's the difference between a diabetic sock and a compression sock?

**The main difference between a diabetic sock and a compression sock is the compression level.**

Diabetic socks offer minimal compression (not greater than 8–15 mmHg). The low compression is recommended for people who suffer from diabetes because they have up to 2–5 times the risk of developing peripheral artery disease (PAD) as compared to people without diabetes. Therefore, compression therapy has been considered a risky practice in patients suffering from diabetes due to risk of compromising vascularity.<sup>6</sup> However, mild compression has been found to be safe and feasible in patients with diabetes and PAD.<sup>7</sup>

**Diabetic socks** are usually loose-fitting hosiery that are designed to protect the feet from moisture and added pressure and injuries, including blisters and sores. **Compression socks** are snug-fitting and are designed to lessen fluid buildup and to prevent blood from pooling in the lower legs and feet in patients suffering from circulation issues.<sup>8</sup>

# Choosing the best compression level for your patients

Compression hosiery is usually available in four pressure gradients—<20, 15–20, 20–30, and 30–40 mmHg. There is no single standard used worldwide. The overall pressure is affected by factors such as the elasticity and stiffness of stocking material, the size and shape of the user’s legs, and the movements and activities of the user.

## How is compression measured?<sup>9</sup>

Basically, the greater the compression level, or compression strength, the tighter the compression stocking. These levels are measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). It’s the same scale used to take blood pressure.

Pressure	Level of Support	Indication
<15 mmHg	Minimal	Asymptomatic individuals as needed for comfort
15–20 mmHg	Mild	Minor varicosities; tired, aching legs; minor ankle, leg, or foot swelling
20–30 mmHg	Moderate	Moderate to severe varicosities, moderate swelling, phlebitis, following vein ablation
30–40 mmHg	Firm	Severe varicosities, severe swelling, management of active ulceration, following deep vein thrombosis, post-surgery



### **8–15 mmHg—Minimal**

For minor or occasional swelling. These products provide a little extra support for those who spend a lot of time on their feet.



### **15–20 mmHg—Mild**

A low level of compression, such as 15–20 mmHg is a great choice for everyday compression stockings to help with mild swelling and fatigued legs due to long periods of travel, sitting or standing.



### **20–30 mmHg—Moderate**

This is the most widely used medical grade because it provides competent compression to the legs without being too strong. The 20–30 mmHg level of compression is ideal for managing swelling in legs, spider veins, varicose veins, travel, sports and after certain surgeries. Pregnant mothers may also benefit from compression stockings to alleviate heaviness, swelling and aching in their legs.



### **30–40 mmHg—Firm**

This stronger compression level is recommended for leg health symptoms that range from moderate to severe. The 30–40 mmHg level of compression is recommended for patients with a blood clot, deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or lymphedema.<sup>10</sup> Because the stocking is providing more compression, it's a good idea to choose a more durable material.



# Ensure proper sizing with our convenient measuring guide

## How to measure

- Always measure each patient and both legs
- Measuring is critical to prevent pressure injuries and to maximize stocking effectiveness
- Take measurements in the morning when swelling is lowest. If not in the morning, elevate feet for 30 minutes before measuring

## Steps for measuring:



Measure ankle



Measure widest part of calf



For thigh  
highs only

Measure widest part of thigh

## What if the patient is in between sizes?

- When in between **2 circumferences:** Select the larger size of the two
- If measurements are different for each leg, the patient will need 2 different pairs

# Donning and caring instructions for your patients



**1.** Reach into stocking. Grasp heel pocket. Look for the square. This is the heel pocket.



**2.** Pull stocking inside out until heel pocket is at the top of the opening.



**3.** Place stocking on foot, stretching sideways, work stocking over foot until heel pocket is positioned over heel.



**4.** Grasp top of the foot area of stocking and pull up over the foot. Then take the rolled up portion of the stocking pull over the ankle and up the calf.



**5.** Smooth the fabric with both hands and adjust the foot comfortably in the foot pocket.



**6.** Pull fabric away from toes to help keep toes straight, relaxed and comfortable.

## How to care for hosiery and socks

Machine wash with warm water on the gentle cycle. A hosiery bag is recommended. Dry on low heat settings or air dry. Do not iron, bleach or dry clean.

# Need help with donning compression products?

## Sock and Stocking Donning Aids

- These easy-to-use aids help reduce the need to bend when putting on socks and stockings to alleviate stress and the potential for a fall
- Sock stays open as the three fingers gently bend to accommodate the contours of the heel and foot
- Loop strap can be manipulated with only one hand and is length adjustable

Item No.	Description	Pkg.
MDS1230	Compression Stocking Aid with Heel Guide	1 ea



MDS1230

## HCPCS codes

Following are HCPCS codes necessary for healthcare claims.

Description	HCPCS code
8–15 mmHg knee high hosiery	A6549
15–20 mmHg knee high hosiery	A6530
20–30 mmHg knee high hosiery	A6530
30–40 mmHg knee high hosiery	A6531
15–20 mmHg thigh high hosiery	A6533
20–30 mmHg thigh high hosiery	A6533
8–15 mmHg compression socks	A6549
15–20 mmHg compression socks	A6530
20–30 mmHg compression socks	A6530

**For more information or product recommendations, contact your Medline Representative, visit [medline.com](https://www.medline.com) or call 1-800-MEDLINE.**

**References:** **1.** Besharat S, Grol-Prokopczyk H, Gao S, Feng C, Akwaa F, Gewandter JS. Peripheral edema: A common and persistent health problem for older Americans. *PLoS One*. 2021 Dec 16;16(12):e0260742. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0260742. PMID: 34914717; PMCID: PMC8675752. Accessed Sept 7, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8675752/#:~:text=The%20prevalence%20of%20lower%20limb,activity%2C%20and%20mobility%20limitation%20variables>. **2.** Todd M. Using compression hosiery to prevent rebound swelling. *Br J Community Nurs*. 2015 Oct;Suppl Chronic:S20, S22–5. doi: 10.12968/bjcn.2015.20. Sup10.S20. PMID: 26418585. **3.** Evans NS, Ratchford EV. Vascular Disease Patient Information Page: Compression therapy. *Vasc Med*. 2021 Jun;26(3):352-355. doi: 10.1177/1358863X211002263. Epub 2021 Apr 8. PMID: 33829923 **4.** Differences Between Compression Socks and Stockings. Care-med website. <https://care-med.ca/differences-between-compression-socks-and-stockings/#:~:text=The%20Difference%20between%20Compression%20Socks%20and%20Stockings&text=Compression%20%2F%20compressive%20socks%20are%20shorter,or%20wear%20of%20hosiery%20style>. Accessed Oct 11, 2022. **5.** What Is the Difference Between Graduated Compression and Regular Compression? Comrad website. <https://www.comradsocks.com/blogs/journal/what-is-the-difference-between-graduated-compression-and-regular-compression>. Accessed Oct 11, 2022. **6.** Wu SC, Crews RT, Skratsky M, Overstreet J, Yalla SV, Winder M, Ortiz J, Andersen CA. Control of lower extremity edema in patients with diabetes: Double blind randomized controlled trial assessing the efficacy of mild compression diabetic socks. *Diabetes Res Clin Pract*. 2017 May; 127:35–43. doi: 10.1016/j.diabres.2017.02.025. Epub 2017 Feb 27. PMID: 28315576; PMCID: PMC5429175. **7.** Rother U, Grussler A, Griesbach C, Almasi-Sperling V, Lang W, Meyer A. Safety of medical compression stockings in patients with diabetes mellitus or peripheral arterial disease. *BMJ Open Diabetes Res Care*. 2020 Jun;8(1):e001316. doi: 10.1136/bmjdr-2020-001316. PMID: 32503811; PMCID: PMC7279622 **8.** Diabetic socks vs. compression socks: What is the difference? <https://www.diabeticsockshop.com/blogs/news/diabetic-socks-vs-compression-socks-what-is-the-difference>. **9.** Understanding Levels of Compression for Stockings. Legsmart website. <https://www.legsmart.com/blogs/resources/7032008-understanding-levels-of-compression-for-stocking> **10.** GoodRx Health website. <https://www.goodrx.com/conditions/hypotension/compression-socks>. Accessed Oct 6, 2022.



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