

# UNDERSTANDING COMPRESSION STOCKINGS

**Compression stockings** improve blood flow by helping to prevent pain, swelling or build-up of fluid in your legs. They can also lower the chances of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and other circulation problems.

**There are 4 main compression levels:**

- 8–15 mmHG [Mild Compression]
- 15–20 mmHG [Moderate Compression]
- 20–30 mmHG [Firm Compression]
- 30–40 mmHG [Extra Firm Compression]



## What is mmHG?

**mmHG** stands for millimeters of mercury and is the level of pressure or compression of the stocking, usually expressed as a number range.

The higher the numbers, the higher the compression. The amount of pressure at the top of the stocking is the lower number in the mmHG range, while the higher number is the amount of pressure at the foot of the stocking. Stockings with higher levels of compression (20–30 mmHG to 30–40 mmHG) will need a prescription from a doctor.

**Who should wear compression stockings?**

Recommended for anyone who has venous disease (abnormal circulatory condition), Lymphoedema, spends time sitting, standing or in a sedentary position including people who have difficulty moving their legs.




Compression stockings should be worn with caution for people with:

- skin infections
- weeping wounds
- allergic to garment fabric
- impaired sensitivity of the limb
- immobility (confined to bed)

**Determine measurement points.**

To start, take note of which area of the leg needs to be measured for your preferred stocking style.

Compression stockings require you to measure the circumference at specific points on the leg and the length of the leg.

Stocking style	Area of Leg				
	Ankle circumference	Calf circumference	Calf length	Thigh circumference	Leg length
 Knee high	✓	✓	✓		
 Thigh high	✓	✓		✓	✓
 Waist high	✓	✓		✓	✓

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## HOW TO MEASURE COMPRESSION STOCKINGS



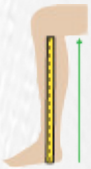
### Measure your ankle circumference.

- Place a measuring tape at the narrowest part of the ankle, just above the ankle bone, and measure the circumference.
- The ankle must always be your first measurement and is the most important as the graduated compression begins at the ankle.



### Measure your Calf circumference.

- Place a measuring tape at the largest part of the calf and measure the circumference.



### Measure your Calf length.

- Sit on a chair and measure the distance from the floor to just below the bend in your knee.
- Do not wear shoes.



### Measure your Thigh circumference.

- Find the widest part of your thigh, directly under your buttocks and measure the circumference.



### Measure your Leg length.

- Measure the distance from the floor behind the heel to the bottom of your buttocks (top of thigh).
- Do not wear shoes. keep leg straight.

### Final Step.

You can now compare your measurements with the sizing chart of your preferred stocking brand to determine the best size and length for your compression stockings.

### How to use a Sizing Chart.

As an example, to measure for a knee-high stocking, the measuring points are:

Ankle circumference (AC)

Calf circumference (CC)

Calf length (CL)

If AC is 20cm,  
CC is 37cm and  
CL is 39cm  
your size is determined as A

Ankle circumference	Small 18 - 21cm		Medium 21 - 25cm		Large 25 - 30cm	
Calf circumference	Small 28 - 39cm		Medium 31 - 45cm		Large 35 - 51cm	
Calf length	Short < 40cm	Long > 40cm	Short < 40cm	Long > 40cm	Short < 40cm	Long > 40cm
Thigh circumference	Small 45 - 65cm		Medium 48 - 75cm		Large 52 - 85cm	
Leg length	Short < 70cm	Long > 70cm	Short < 70cm	Long > 70cm	Short < 70cm	Long > 70cm
Brand size	A	B	C	D	E	F

Note: The sizing chart of your stocking brand will look different to this table, but they all follow the same principles. Refer to a brand's website or packaging to find a sizing chart.

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## HOW TO APPLY & REMOVE COMPRESSION STOCKINGS

Compression stockings are often difficult to apply and remove as the compression is greatest at the ankle, requiring the largest part of the foot to pass through the smallest and tightest part of the stocking. While difficult at first, it does get easier with practice and time if the correct steps are followed.

### To APPLY stockings



1 Turn leg of the stocking inside out and down as far as the heel. Except for the foot, the inside of the stocking should face outwards.



2 Use both thumbs to stretch the foot of the stocking open and pull the stocking over the foot.



3 Grip the folded edge of the stocking and pull it over the heel.



4 Once all the leg of the stocking is above the ankle, reach inside with thumbs and ease the fabric up the leg in a zigzag movement towards the knee. Do not pull top seam up as this will damage the material.

### To REMOVE stockings



1 Take hold of the top of the stocking and pull it down to the ankle.



2 Insert finger(s) between the stocking and leg and stretch it over the ankle.



3 Slowly pull the stocking off the foot.



4 If the stocking is difficult to remove, consider a stocking aid such as an applicator, donner or glider.

## TIPS & ADVICE

- **Stockings should feel snug, but not painfully tight. They need to be firm fitting to do their job and so they may feel tight at first.**
- **It is normal for stockings to be pulled up or reposition a few times a day.**
- **Open-toe stockings are often easier to get on and off but are otherwise the same.**
- **Stockings need to be replaced every 3 to 6 months, or when they start to sag or become loose.**
- **Compression stockings should be worn even during hot summer months, when legs need the support more than ever.**
- **Before reordering replacements, remeasure legs and if measurements are greater or less than 3 cm from original measurement, you may need a new size.**
- **Take length measurements from the ground up.**
- **If the foot size of a stocking is either too large or too small, try a stocking with an open toe.**
- **Hand wash gently in warm water with a mild soap or detergent, or in a clothes bag on a gentle machine cycle.**
- **Do not use bleach, fabric softeners or hot water.**