Best practice management of chronic wounds on the lower leg

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What is a chronic wound?
What causes ulcers in the lower limbs?
Peripheral arterial disease

Arteries become narrowed and blood flow decreases in arteriosclerosis

Build up of fatty substances in the wall of the artery
Venous insufficiency
Lymphoedema

- Primary lymphoedema
- Secondary Lymphoedema
  - Trauma / Tissue damage
e.g. Surgery, burns
  - Malignant disease
  - Chronic venous insufficiency
  - Infection
  - Inflammation e.g. rheumatoid arthritis
- Endocrine disease
- Immobility
Diabetic complications

Peripheral arterial disease

Neuropathy affecting:
- All peripheral nerve fibres
- Pain fibres
- Motor neurones
- Autonomic nervous system
Further consequences of neuropathy

- Motor neuropathy leads to weakness of intrinsic foot muscles
- Deformity leads to areas of increased pressure
  \[ \text{pressure} = \frac{\text{force}}{\text{area}} \]
Other more unusual causes of ulceration

- **Inflammatory disease**
  e.g. Rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus

- **Unusual vascular/ arterial diseases**
  e.g. Vasculitis
  Pyoderma gangrenosum
  Raynaud’s disease

- **Haematological disease**
  e.g. Sickle cell anaemia

- **Infection**
  e.g. TB, tropical infection

- **Malignancy**
What is the impact of chronic wounds on the lower leg?

Guest J et al (2016)
http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/5/12/e009283.full.pdf

Betty’s story

Inappropriate care can cost 10x as much as appropriate care

£4.5 - £5.1 billion

So where do we start?
Diagnosis

• Where is the ulcer?

Foot or leg?

And why does this matter??
Leg Ulcers

What is the underlying cause?

Arterial insufficiency?
Venous insufficiency?
Lymphoedema?
Or something else?
Aetiology of UK leg ulceration
Tests for diagnosing the underlying cause of chronic wounds on the leg/foot

Venous Disease
Duplex scan

Arterial disease
Doppler ABPI

Neuropathy
Treatment for diabetic foot ulcers

Is the patient diabetic?
- Yes
  - Is this a life or limb threatening problem?
    - Yes
      - Refer immediately to acute services and inform MD foot team
    - No
      - No
        - Refer to the MD foot team
  - No
    - Refer to the MD foot team

NICE NG19 2016
Treatment for diabetic foot ulcers (and arterial foot ulcers)

Offer one or more of the following as standard care for treating diabetic foot ulcers:

- Offloading.
- Control of foot infection. (antibiotics)
- Control of ischaemia. (surgery)
- Wound debridement. (podiatry)
- Wound dressings. (nursing)

NICE NG19

legsmatter.org
Treatment for venous leg ulcers

- **Graduated high compression** (Bandaging or hosiery)
  - O’Meara el al 2012 – Cochrane Review. Compression for venous leg ulcers.

- **Oral Pentoxifylline**
  - Jull et al 2012 – Cochrane Review
    Pentoxifylline for treating venous leg ulcers

- **Endovenous ablation surgery for promoting healing and reducing risk of recurrence**
  - Barwell JR, Davies CE, Deacon J, et al. ESCHAR Study 2004
Arterial Ulcers - Treatment

• Consider analgesia
• Stop smoking
• Refer for surgical opinion
• Lose weight
• Meticulous foot care
• Learn to live within claudication limits
• Avoid maceration
LEGS MATTER CAMPAIGN

To raise awareness and understanding of conditions of the lower leg and foot, and to ensure the timely and effective care of them.
WORKING TOGETHER

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS WITH NHS ENGLAND

PATIENTS FRIENDS & FAMILY

GPs, PRACTICE NURSES, COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS & NURSING HOME STAFF
Leg and foot problems are one of the biggest health challenges of our time. That’s why we’re
Help & Information

Know what normal looks like. Most leg problems can be helped by doing something early on. Here's some information about what to look for and what to do.

For patients, family & friends
Worried about your legs feet? Here's what you should look out for.

For healthcare professionals
Worried about your patient's legs and feet?
For patients, family & friends

If you or someone you know has leg and feet problems, they can be helped by doing something early on. Find out what to expect, get information, practical advice and support from our experts.

What to look out for

Swollen legs & feet

Sores and knocks

Dry and itchy skin

Signs that there could be a problem with your legs or feet

Are your legs or feet swollen?

A sore, knock or insect bite that isn’t healing?

Is the skin on your lower legs dry and itchy?
Dry and itchy skin

Our lower legs can sometimes get inflamed or itchy. This is known as dermatitis.

What causes dermatitis?

Dermatitis on the lower legs can often be caused by eczema. Eczema is a common skin condition that comes in many forms and affects people of all ages. It's not contagious, so you can't catch it from someone else.

Contact eczema / dermatitis

Contact eczema can be caused by external irritants such as body lotions and creams, or by clothing that contains wool.

Atopic eczema / dermatitis
Contact dermatitis

1. Overview
2. Symptoms
3. Causes
4. Diagnosis
5. Treatment
For healthcare professionals

Advice and support to help recognise the signs and symptoms of lower leg and foot problems.

- **Swollen legs and feet**
  - Can occur when fluid has difficulty returning back to the heart
  - [Read more](#)

- **Sores and knocks**
  - The most common cause of poor healing is venous hypertension
  - [Read more](#)

- **Dry & itchy skin**
  - Often associated with venous disease / venous hypertension
  - [Read more](#)

- **Reddish brown staining**
  - Known as haemosiderin, can often be confused with cellulitis
  - [Read more](#)

- **Varicose veins**
  - [Read more](#)

- **Cramp in the legs**
  - [Read more](#)

- **Hot inflamed**
  - [Read more](#)

- **Sores on the foot**
  - [Read more](#)
Dry and itchy skin

Dry, itchy skin on the lower legs is often associated with venous disease / venous hypertension, which is also known as venous eczema, varicose eczema or gravitational dermatitis.

Causes of dry and itchy skin

Prolonged high pressure in the lower limb veins results in chronic inflammatory skin changes. Your patient might present with:

- ‘Red legs’ (commonly confused with cellulitis)
- Dry itchy skin
- Small discrete patches of skin plaques or, at its most severe
- More widespread and circumferential areas of inflammatory blistered
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Glossary

On occasion we need to use specific medical-based terms when talking about problems with legs and feet. Our glossary provides a list of medical terms with plain English description to help you understand the terms we’ve used.

Aetiology

The cause, set of causes, or manner of causation of a disease or condition.
Leg and foot problems are one of the biggest health challenges of our time. That’s why we’re standing up to say legs matter.

**Help & Information**

Know what healthy legs and feet look like whether you’re a patient or healthcare professional

**Our Manifesto**

What we stand for and what we’re doing to make Legs Matter more

**Publications & Evidence**

Carefully curated resources to help healthcare professionals in their everyday work
Publications & Evidence

We've carefully curated a whole host or guides, papers and resources to help support you in your everyday work.

View by...

Cellulitis in lymphoedema - The cellulitis concensus document

Date: December, 2016
Published by: BLS & LSN
Authors: BLS & LSN
Access: Open Access
Leg and foot problems are one of the biggest health challenges of our time. That’s why we’re...
About us

The Legs Matter coalition is working together to increase awareness, understanding and action on lower leg and foot conditions among the public and healthcare professionals.

Our manifesto
What we stand for and what we're doing to make Legs Matter

The coalition
Our team of eight healthcare charities and not-for-profits

Key contacts
Meet the experts and brains behind the campaign

The cost of care
Chronic wound care costs the NHS between circa £5 billion per year
The cost of care

A recent research study estimated that the annual cost of managing wounds in the NHS and associated comorbidities is £5.3 billion (which is is comparable to the £5 billion spent on managing obesity in the NHS).

Most of these wounds are cared for in the community and the most common type of wounds are wounds on the lower leg such as leg and foot ulcers. More than half the leg ulcers recorded in this study had no recorded diagnosis and so are unlikely to be receiving effective care.

NHS England has estimated that sub-optimal care of leg ulcers can cost up to ten times more than correctly managed care.

Imagine how much money we could save if we gave patients the right care.
Leg and foot problems are one of the biggest health challenges facing us. That's why we've

STAND UP FOR LEGS

Legs Matter!
Updates & Events

FEATURED
Events | 5-6 June 2018 - Milton Keynes

Wound Care Today: the MUST attend wound care event of 2018

In this first year, only 500 can take part - register now.

Read more

Events | 24 May 2018 - Liverpool

Leg Ulcers: Right Care, Right Time

Events | 26 to 27 September 2018 - Worcester

18th Annual Leg Club
Leg and foot problems are one of the biggest health challenges of our time. That's why we're standing up for legs!
Get involved

Everyone has a part to play in making legs matter. We want everyone to take charge of their own leg and foot health.

Why Legs Matter
Leg and foot conditions are one of our biggest health challenges

Tell your MP your story
Not happy with your care or treatment. Take a stand

Sharing the message
Everyone has a part to play in making legs matter

How we’re helping people
Inspirational stories of people who’ve stood up for legs
Corporate partners

Would your organisation like to support the Legs Matter campaign?

We want to work with like-minded organisations to help raise awareness of our campaign and to further develop the website, and signpost people to relevant and useful information.

To achieve this, we want to develop strong working relationships with ‘Associate Partner’ organisations that share our vision and aims. We want to hear your ideas about how we can achieve this to the benefit of all.

Are you interested? If so, please complete our call back form below.

Your Name (required)

Your Email (required)

Organisation

Telephone
Tell us what you think

If there’s anything you want to ask us or tell us, whether it’s a suggestion about our website, a complaint, or a compliment, drop us a line at support@legsmatter.org

Stay In Touch
Campaign updates, straight to your inbox

Pop your email address here

Sign up

Reshaping care together

We are a coalition of healthcare organisations that have come together to make sure that anyone with a lower leg or foot problem understands their condition and receives the urgent care, attention and support they need.
THANK YOU.

JOIN US IN RESHAPING CARE TOGETHER

STAND UP FOR LEGS

LEGS MATTER!

RESHAPING CARE TOGETHER...