

## ***COMPRESSION STOCKINGS***

For those individuals with venous insufficiency problems, the use of a high quality medical grade graduated compression stocking is the main stay for counter acting the effects of backward flow of blood and the high pressure generated in the lower legs. The terms high quality, medical grade and graduated are all important in describing these stockings because there are many other support hose and white hospital provided TED stockings used around surgical avenues, which are not adequate in treating venous insufficiency disorder. The graduated medical stockings are made and fashioned in such a way that there is a graded compression with maximum impact on the foot and ankle and slightly less compression as one goes up the calf and some times above the knee if one uses thigh high stockings. Stockings are graded in compression strength and expressed in terms of millimeters of mercury compression so that frequently they can be purchased in 15-20 millimeters of mercury, 20-30 millimeters of mercury, 30-40 millimeters of mercury and greater than 40 millimeters of mercury compression. This again reflects the maximum compression near the ankle area and slightly less as one proceeds proximally in the extremity. This is specifically designed and constructed in this fashion so that the veins in the leg are gently compressed, assisting blood flow in the correct direction back up the leg and toward the heart and lungs. Regular use of these compression stockings during the day when one is upright or sedentary is important to counter act the effects of venous insufficiency disorder and will help with symptomatic control and perhaps slow down the progression of vein dilation and branch vein distention. They have even been shown to help heal open ulcerations in the lower ankle and leg. These stockings, while very helpful prior to, during and after treatment do not correct the ultimate problem at hand with the refluxing valves and do not form any type of permanent treatment. They are helpful if they are used regularly and must be of high quality or they are ineffective. The stockings also have a limited life expectancy because they become overstretched with time and will no longer provide the desired compression strength after longer periods of use. It is very important that the first pair of stockings that you have is fit properly. You should seek out a certified stocking fitter and be certain that you try on the garments and are fully instructed in their use and proper care. It is always good to save the box that the stockings come in so that you can refer back to these for future purchases, assuming that you have a good fit and do not need to change them along the way. If one experiences considerable edema or swelling in the lower legs, it is quite possible that after several weeks or a month of regular use you may require a slightly smaller size. Again, this simply indicates help in your problem and that the stockings are doing what they are meant to do for you in this regard. There are several reputable stocking manufacturers. I will include some website links if you wish to review this subject in greater detail. There are also a large number of non-reputable manufacturers that do not adhere to quality control or graded compression strength. These are often found in mailers or on specials for \$10 a piece. I would encourage you not to look at these unreliable products, but stay mainly with quality compression stockings.

We will assist you in determining whether your best choice should be a Knee-high or Thigh-high compression and talk to you about the differences and the reasons for this selection. However, in general, the maximum benefit is usually obtained by wearing Knee-high stockings as this provides the best compression in the most needed part of your leg, namely the lower portion. Remember that proper fit is important and that the proper wearing of these stockings, particularly the level of which you wear them, is very important for your comfort and for maximum support. This is why being fit by a certified fitter is important and seeking complete instructions and more education in this regard.

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