

# Stockings perform better than bandages to treat leg ulcers

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A new study has found that leg ulcers take the same time to heal when people wear compression stockings rather than traditional bandages.

People in a trial, carried out by researchers from the universities of Manchester and York and funded by the National Institute for Health Research as part of their Health Technology Assessment programme (NIHR HTA), also reported less ulcer recurrence after using the stockings and required fewer nurse visits making the stockings better value for money for the NHS.

But the study, published in *The Lancet* today (6 December), also found that not everyone liked to wear the stockings with more people changing from this to another treatment compared with those in the bandage group.

Venous leg ulcers are common chronic wounds that are painful, recur and reduce quality of life. They are a consequence of damage or blockage to the veins of the leg which can result in skin breakdown and impaired healing.

Bandages which apply pressure to the leg, called multi-layer compression bandages, have until now been the main treatment for venous leg ulcers and are used by thousands of people. But the current method of treating these wounds costs the NHS millions of pounds per year.

Dr Jo Dumville, Senior Lecturer in Applied Health Research at The University of Manchester's School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work who was the chief investigator on the study, said: "The finding that compression stockings are a cost effective treatment for venous [leg ulcers](#) is important for patients, carers and the NHS.

"Compression bandages are bulky, unattractive and may interfere with normal footwear, they can also be costly as they take time to apply and often require frequent nurse visits to change them."

The study, known as Venous leg Ulcer Study IV (VenUS IV), saw 454 people trial the two methods and will now help inform nursing practice.

Nikki Stubbs, Clinical Lead at Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, said: "The findings support the use of compression stockings for some people with [venous leg ulcers](#). Where appropriate, the day to day application of stockings can be undertaken by patients, carers and a range of health professionals. From a patient perspective this may promote independence as well as enabling the NHS to maximise the use of its resources to best effect."

Provided by University of Manchester

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