

Wound Care Essentials: Quick Reference Nursing Guides

What is a Venous Stasis Ulcer?

When the veins are not working properly, they are unable to adequately bring venous blood back to the heart, causing an increase in venous pressure and fluid to leak into the surrounding tissues (causing *edema*). Due to the increased pressure in the veins, the fluid cannot make its way back into the vascular system and instead stay in the tissues, eventually damaging the skin and causing an ulceration on the surface.



Photo credit: AAWC

How do you identify it?

Venous ulcers usually occur on the lower extremities, generally *above the ankles and below the knees*. They have *irregular wound margins* and tend to have moderate to *large amounts of drainage*.

How do you treat it?

Relieving edema through compression and elevation is just as important as treating the ulceration itself. Compression stockings, ace wraps, or unna boots are used to provide compression to the affected extremity (Caution: Be sure to rule out concurrent arterial disease with an ABI prior to applying compression). Elevate legs when sitting, and consider elevating the legs on at least two pillows when laying down at night. As for the wound bed, debridement of devitalized tissue will aid in wound healing. Apply an absorbent dressing to manage the (often copious) drainage and keep the periwound skin from becoming too moist.



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