

Accident & Emergency
Department



Patient Information

Leg Ulcers

Leg ulcers

Leg ulcers are abnormal "holes" that occur in breaks in the skin in the lower leg. Ulcers can occur in any person, but the elderly who have poor circulation are most likely to develop ulcers.

Ulcers are usually caused by a combination of two problems: sluggish circulation to the leg and poor drainage due to varicose veins. The further the distance is from the heart, the more vulnerable the area is. The skin becomes thin and when injury occur from trauma, the skin breaks down and heal poorly. The small crack in the skin enlarges and become an ulcer.

Slow healing is the main problem. The ulcer has dead tissue in it and weeps.

The commonest site is the inside of the leg just above the ankle. The skin around the ulcer is red and itchy and discolored. Those with diabetes or clogged arteries further prolong healing of the wound.

The key is to keep the leg elevated as much as possible and bandage with a firm bandage or use support stockings which helps the blood circulation. Avoid standing for long periods, do not smoke and have a nutritious diet. Be extremely careful not to injure the leg by trauma or scratching. Keep ulcers covered and sterile. The ulcer may require regular dressings to keep clean and free of infection. Have regular medical check at the local clinic to ensure good wound healing.