

# Leg and Ankle Edema: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

---

Swelling in the legs, ankles, and feet is called edema. It is common after you sit or stand for a while. Long plane flights or car rides often cause swelling in the legs and feet. You may also have swelling if you have to stand for long periods of time at your job. Problems with the veins in the legs (varicose veins) and changes in hormones can also cause swelling. Sometimes the swelling in the ankles and feet is caused by a more serious problem, such as heart failure, infection, blood clots, or liver or kidney disease.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

---

- If your doctor gave you medicine, take it as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Whenever you are resting, raise your legs up. Try to keep the swollen area higher than the level of your heart.
- Take breaks from standing or sitting in one position.
  - Walk around to increase the blood flow in your lower legs.
  - Move your feet and ankles often while you stand, or tighten and relax your leg muscles.
- Wear support stockings. Put them on in the morning, before swelling gets worse.
- Eat a balanced diet. Lose weight if you need to.
- Limit the amount of salt (sodium) in your diet. Salt holds fluid in the body and may increase swelling.

## When should you call for help?

---



**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have symptoms of a blood clot in your lung (called a pulmonary embolism). These may include:
  - Sudden chest pain.
  - Trouble breathing.
  - Coughing up blood.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of a blood clot, such as:
  - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
  - Redness and swelling in your leg or groin.

- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks or pus.
  - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your swelling is getting worse.
- You have new or worsening pain in your legs.
- You do not get better as expected.

## Where can you learn more?

---

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **N696** in the search box to learn more about "**Leg and Ankle Edema: Care Instructions**".

---

©2006-2019 Healthwise, Incorporated.

Care instructions adapted under license by Katy Nephrology Associates. This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.