

Leg ulcer - venous

Introduction

What is a leg ulcer?

A leg ulcer is an area of damaged skin below the knee on your leg, or foot, which takes longer than six weeks to heal. Leg ulcers appear as shallow holes, or craters, in which the tissue underneath is exposed. They can vary in size, colour, and depth.

Leg ulcers can often be a long-term (chronic) and recurring condition. Around 80-85% of all leg ulcers are venous leg ulcers, which develop due to poor blood circulation in the veins of your legs.

Other types of leg ulcer can include arterial leg ulcers, which result from poor circulation in the arteries, and diabetic leg ulcers, which can occur as a result of diabetes. Venous leg ulcers can be painful, and can cause aching, itching, and swelling in the affected leg.

How common are venous leg ulcers?

Venous leg ulcers become more common with age, and are very rare among people under the age of 45. It is estimated that in people who are over the age of 80, 1 in every 50 are affected by venous leg ulcers. They are also more common in those who are obese, or immobile.

Treatment for venous leg ulcers involves cleaning and dressing the wound, and applying pressure through compression bandages. However, they can take a long time to heal, and can recur even after they have fully healed. Venous leg ulcers can also become infected, or develop complications.