

# Leg ulcer - venous

## Causes

A venous leg ulcer develops as a result of constant high blood pressure (hypertension) in the veins of your leg, which eventually causes fluid to be forced out of them. The fluid causes swelling and damage to the skin, which becomes thin and inflamed, and can eventually break down to form an ulcer.

High blood pressure in your legs can be caused by blood not flowing properly through the veins in your leg, known as venous insufficiency. It can also be the result of damage to the pump in your calf muscle, preventing normal blood flow.

In healthy leg veins, blood pressure is kept at a normal level by the pump in your calf muscle pushing blood through as you move around, and by valves in your veins. These valves prevent blood from flowing backwards (known as venous reflux), and ensure that the blood keeps moving through your veins and that your blood pressure stays down. However, if either the valves in your veins or the pump in your calf muscle is damaged, your blood pressure will rise and a venous leg ulcer can develop.

A number of factors increase your risk of developing a venous leg ulcer including:

- **being obese,**
- **extreme lack of movement** (immobility),
- **having had deep vein thrombosis (DVT),**
- **having varicose veins,** or if someone in your family has them,
- **a past leg injury,** such as a broken bone, and
- **increasing age.**