

# Leg ulcer - venous

## Complications

A venous leg ulcer can result in several complications which are detailed below.

### **Immobility**

You may find it difficult and painful to move around if you have a venous leg ulcer. This, in turn can make the ulcer worse, as blood pressure rises when you are immobile, aggravating your ulcer.

### **Infection**

Venous leg ulcers can become infected, so it is important to look out for any signs of infection. These include swelling, redness, pus, and increased pain. You may also have a fever and feel generally unwell.

If your venous leg ulcer becomes infected, it can be treated using antibiotics, such as flucloxacillin.

### **Loss of quality of life and general functioning**

Living with a venous leg ulcer can be difficult. Ulcers can be painful and take a long time to heal, and you may find that you need a lot of time off work. For some people, the loss of independence and social isolation can cause emotional and psychological distress.

### **Osteomyelitis**

The bacteria from an infected venous leg ulcer can spread and cause osteomyelitis. This is an infection of the nearby bone. Osteomyelitis causes fever, nausea, and severe pain in the affected bone. If you have osteomyelitis, you will need to be admitted to hospital in order to receive treatment with antibiotics, which are usually given intravenously (through a drip into your vein).

### **Blood poisoning (septicaemia)**

If a venous leg ulcer becomes infected, the bacteria can spread to your blood stream and multiply rapidly, causing blood poisoning, or septicaemia. If you have blood poisoning, you may develop a fever and headaches, and have vomiting, diarrhoea, and rapid breathing. Blood poisoning can be treated using antibiotics, and again you will need to be admitted to hospital to receive treatment.