

Leg Ulcers

In Jamaica, leg ulcers occur in up to 30% of persons with sickle cell disease.

Prevention:

- Protect your ankles from biting insects/scratches/trauma especially in childhood.
- Wear proper fitting shoes and sandals.
- **Massage and moisturize** the skin around the ankles daily.
- Daily exercise of feet.
- Elevate feet when sitting.
- Clean and dress cuts and scrapes as soon as they occur.

If you get an ulcer:

1. See your doctor as soon as possible if you think you are developing an ulcer.
2. If your ulcer is sloughy, your doctor will advise you on what you can do to get it looking red and healthy again so that it can heal. This may involve using grated green pawpaw (papaya) wrapped in gauze on the ulcer to get rid of the slough.
3. Twice daily cleaning with diluted hydrogen peroxide is ideal (1 part hydrogen peroxide to 6 parts water) when the ulcers are sloughy, but once they are clean – clean only once daily.
4. Daily application of gauze dressing soaked in saline or antiseptic solution like potassium permanganate solution – (it should be a very light pink colour when made up)
5. Keep dressings wet when the ulcer base is red and healthy looking. If they dry out, soak the dressing with clean water or saline before removal. Adaptic® dressings are very good for this as they do not stick to the ulcer and may be tried.
6. Elastic supportive bandage or compression stockings should always be used during the daytime – the picture shows you how you should wrap your ankle.
7. Keep your leg up as much as possible during the day to prevent swelling of the ankle.
8. Twice daily massage of the skin surrounding the ulcer (you may use cocoa butter, olive oil or any other emollient available) and do ankle exercises (roll your ankle in circles 12 times clockwise and 12 times anti-clockwise). This improves circulation in your foot and may help to decrease the swelling.
9. Taking zinc and multivitamins may help ulcers heal more quickly.



AFTER YOUR ULCER HAS HEALED:

- **YOU MUST BE EVEN MORE CAREFUL TO PROTECT YOUR ANKLES.**
- **CONTINUE TO WEAR COMPRESSION STOCKINGS AS THIS MAY PREVENT SWELLING OF THE ANKLE THAT LEADS TO RECURRENCE OF THE ULCERS.**