

Compression Bandaging Instructions

This purpose of this guide is to help patients and caregivers continue with short stretch compression bandaging after the patient has been discharged from the hospital. Please follow-up as soon as possible with a certified lymphedema therapist (through outpatient therapy or home therapy). Your acute care occupational therapist can provide you with a list of outpatient sites that provide lymphedema services.

What materials do I need for compression bandaging?

We will give you the bandaging materials you need before you leave the hospital. You will need these materials:

- Stockinette
- Foam padding
- Short stretch compression bandages of different sizes (we usually provide you with 6 cm, 8 cm, and 10 cm bandages)
- Tape
- Non-skid footwear (like grip socks)

When should I change my compression bandaging?

- You should remove and change your bandages every 24-48 hours for bathing and skin care.
- Remove and change your bandages if they become loose or if you can see that they are dirty.

When should I call my doctor?

Remove your bandages and call your doctor if you have any of these symptoms:

Acute Care Occupational Therapy

- Pain, or feelings of tightness, heat, irritation, achiness, or heaviness, in the bandaged leg
- Signs of infection (redness, warmth, swelling, or pain) in your leg or foot
- Skin breakdown (signs include a change in skin color that does not improve after 20 minutes of removing the bandaging, or a change in skin texture and temperature)
 - This may be a sign of a pressure ulcer forming, which are most likely around the bony areas of the leg and foot (the ankle, sides of the foot, and the shin bone).
- Change in the temperature or color of your bandaged leg

What are some general tips for good compression bandaging?

- Wear loose-fitting clothing and footwear that can comfortably fit the bandages.
- Roll the bandages and foam padding before starting, and pre-cut pieces of tape.
- Try to keep bandages snug and smooth as you put them on.
- Do not pull or tug on your bandages.
- Remember: compression happens by layering the materials, not by making the bandages tight.

What are the steps for compression bandaging?

1. Wash and dry the legs and feet you are going to bandage, then apply hypoallergenic lotion (such as Eucerin® or Cetaphil®).
2. Place the stockinette on your leg, from the base of your toes up to the thigh.



3. Place foam on your leg in 1 of these 2 ways:

- Place a long foam roll around your leg.
- Place foam along your shin and around the back of your ankle.



4. Start bandaging around your foot with your first bandage.

- Begin by using the shortest bandage at the base of the toes and spiral the bandage around your foot up to the ankle.



- Then go around the back of the ankle, coming back down toward the middle of your foot. Continue the spiral until the bandage ends, and then secure it with tape.



5. Put on your second bandage, starting at the foot and spiraling up your leg.
- Begin the second bandage at the base of the toes. Spiral the bandage in the **opposite direction** as the first bandage.
 - Spiral the bandage up from the foot until the bandage ends, and secure it with tape.



6. Put on any extra bandages you need to bandage all the way up your leg to just below your knee.
- Begin the third bandage a few inches above the ankle bone.
 - Spiral the bandage to below the knee, going in the **opposite direction** as the second bandage. Secure it with tape.
 - Fold down the stockinette over the bandages and make sure to put on non-skid footwear to prevent slipping during walking.



Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by University of Michigan (U-M) Health for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by U-M Health and for which U-M Health does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition, or your treatment plan.

Author: Katelin Iott, OTD OTRL CLT-LANA
Edited by: Brittany Batell, MPH MSW CHES®

Patient Education by [U-M Health](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](#). Last revised 08/2024