

# WHAT ARE THE MAIN RISK FACTORS FOR VENOUS LEG ULCERS?

Before breaking down the key venous leg ulcer risk factors, it is important to understand what they are and how they affect patients.

Venous leg ulcers are defined as chronic leg wounds that take longer than 4 to 6 weeks to heal. Venous leg ulcers mostly present on the inside of the leg, just above the ankle. They are the most common type of leg ulcer and are estimated to account for 60 to 80% of all cases.[1]

The main venous leg ulcer risk factor is chronic venous insufficiency. However, there are a number of other intrinsic and extrinsic factors that can increase your risk of developing a leg ulcer.

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| <b>Age</b>               | The valves in the veins tend to weaken as we age. When the valves are damaged, the blood is unable to flow normally through the body. This makes us more susceptible to venous leg ulceration.   |
| <b>Obesity</b>           | Being overweight increases the pressure in your veins, which can increase your risk of venous insufficiency or worsen any existing symptoms of the condition.  |
| <b>Previous Ulcer</b>    | Having a history of venous leg ulceration is one of the biggest risk factors for developing future ulcers. Venous leg ulcer recurrence rates are estimated to be between 45-70%.[2]  |
| <b>Hereditary</b>        | A family history of chronic venous insufficiency is a useful indicator of venous leg ulcer risk levels.[3]   |
| <b>Impaired Mobility</b> | Being immobile for an extended period of time means the calf muscle pump mechanism is not activated through movement, including walking or standing. This makes it more difficult for the veins to transport the deoxygenated blood from your legs back up to your heart properly. |
| <b>Varicose Veins</b>    | Varicose veins are swollen veins that typically occur on the lower limbs. Individuals with varicose veins are at an increased risk of venous leg ulcers because their veins are under high pressure.   |

<b>Deep Vein Thrombosis</b>	Deep vein thrombosis is a condition that occurs when a blood clot forms in one or more of the deep veins, particularly around the legs. These clots can damage the valves in the veins and increase the chances of developing a venous leg ulcer.
<b>Female Sex</b>	Venous leg ulcer rates are higher in the female sex than they are in the male sex.[4]
<b>Surgery In Lower Limbs</b>	Surgical procedures such as knee or hip replacements can sometimes cause valve damage.[5] Lower limb surgeries can also lead to reduced mobility, sometimes temporarily, which can increase pressure in the veins.
<b>Smoking</b>	Smoking has a negative impact on the flow of blood to the legs. Studies show that smoking can lead to delayed wound healing for existing leg ulcers.[6]
<b>Prolonged Standing</b>	Standing for a long time can accelerate the backflow of blood into the legs caused by incompetent valves in the veins.

## References:

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