

Compression socks: *A fitness friend?*

Some athletes use compression socks during their exercise or sports activities. They look like tights, knee-high socks or sleeves that go over the calves.

Compression socks are not new. They have been used for years to help with leg pain, swelling, blood clots and varicose veins. They work by gently squeezing the legs to help move blood upward.

But do they help with exercise performance?



LACK OF EVIDENCE FOR EXERCISE PERFORMANCE

While compression socks aren't usually harmful, they're not proven to be helpful for exercise. Studies have not found that compression socks help a person's athletic ability.

Still, there may be some benefit to using them if your doctor says it's okay. Some evidence suggests that compression socks may help slightly with exercise recovery. A review of several small studies found that for some people, compression socks could help with muscle soreness. But, because these results haven't been proven in large studies, it's too early to say whether they will work for most people.

Some people enjoy the feeling of pressure on the legs. They may feel that it helps them exercise longer. If that's the case, compression socks can be a good way to help you stay active.



USING COMPRESSION SOCKS

If you're interested in compression socks, ask your doctor about them. They can help with:

- Legs that feel achy or heavy
- Swelling in the feet or legs from standing or sitting for long hours
- Pain from varicose veins
- Preventing blood clots, especially after surgery or for people who can't move around easily. This could be after an injury or for people who have an illness that requires them to be in bed for long periods.



Some compression socks are tighter than others. Your doctor can give you a prescription for them, or you may purchase them online. Ask your doctor how long you should wear them, and what to do if you find the socks uncomfortable.

Sources: British Journal of Sports Medicine, Journal of Sports Science and Medicine, U.S. National Library of Medicine