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# Alberta Aids to Daily Living PROGRAM

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## Compression Stockings

### **PROGRAM MANDATE:**

*Within existing resources, the Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) Program helps Albertans with a long-term disability, chronic illness or terminal illness maintain their independence in their home through the provision of medical equipment and supplies to meet their basic medically assessed needs.*

## Healthy Leg Tips

- Trim toe nails regularly
- Elevate legs as often as possible
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes
- Limit long periods of time in direct sunlight
- Wear loose fitting clothing
- Limit salty foods
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit alcoholic drinks

## More Tips for Maintaining Healthy Legs

- Avoid standing for long periods of time. When you stand still, blood flow slows down and can cause the veins in your legs to fill-up and swell.
- Be smoke-free. Smoking or living in a smoking environment can reduce circulation in your legs.
- Control your diet. Follow the Canada Food Guide and eat a balanced diet of fruits, grains, vegetables, milk products and protein with reduced sodium (salt) intake.
- Get active! Exercise gets your muscles working and increases the blood flow to your legs and heart. Need help getting started? Consult a health care professional, like a registered nurse, occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- Avoid hot baths or showers. The heat can cause your legs to swell so it is best to use warm water. Protect your skin by patting it dry – it is gentler than rubbing. Moisturizing after your shower or bath will allow your skin to absorb the moisture. Note: Moisturize at night as lotion can break down stockings.

## Who is Eligible?

AADL provides assistance for three pairs of compression stockings every 12 months to Albertans with Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVI) Class 2 or 3, or Chronic Lymphedema. Assistance is only given to maintain the leg once swelling has been reduced.

Compression stockings should be worn everyday to provide support unless you are sick or spending the day in bed. They should be taken off when you go to bed at night.

If your legs continue to swell, return to a doctor or health care professional.

To qualify for compression stockings from AADL, you must:

- be an Alberta resident
- have a valid and active Alberta Personal Health Card, and
- have been assessed by an AADL authorizer.

The program does not provide funding for patients with:

- Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVI) Class 1,
- simple varices,
- swelling,
- reduced/achy feeling in the legs,
- Arterial Insufficiency,
- pre or post-surgery needs,
- unresolved wounds,
- short-term intervention,
- problems related to blood pressure (high or low),
- osteoarthritis,
- complications from pregnancy, such as swelling,
- a family history looking for prevention.

## Obtaining compression stockings from AADL

### 1. How do I get my legs assessed?

- The AADL authorizer (i.e. home care, community care, etc.) will perform a leg assessment. This may include checking and testing for leg swelling and discoloration, leg pulses, and circulation in the leg.
- The AADL authorizer performs assessments in a community health clinic or home care office, a regional health authority Aids to Daily Living office, or in the hospital.
- If you are eligible for compression stockings from AADL, the authorizer will provide you with an authorization form as well as any other information you need. You will also receive a list of AADL vendors in your area where you may go to get your compression stockings.
- An authorizer must complete the assessment and authorization process prior to you receiving your compression stockings.

### 2. Where do I get my compression stockings?

- Go to one of the AADL vendors on the list given to you by the AADL authorizer. You cannot go to an unauthorized vendor or a regular department store to get your compression stockings.
- Take the authorization form that was given to you and present it to the vendor.
- AADL vendors do not assess or authorize clients for compression stockings. However, if the AADL authorizer did not measure your leg(s) for compression stockings, trained staff at the AADL vendor will do so.

### 3. How do I make sure the stockings will fit?

- To ensure the compression stockings fit properly and provide support, go to the vendor as early in the morning as possible. Leg swelling will be the least at this time. If your legs are swollen, they will have to be elevated for a minimum of 45 minutes before a measurement can be taken.
- The AADL vendor should give you several manufacturers' brands of compression stockings to try on. There are three different lengths of compression stockings: below the knee, thigh high and pantyhose. Knee high is the most common length and can address most medical conditions.
- Your health care professional will determine what length of compression stockings you medically need.
- Assistance for pantyhose is not provided unless problems with your leg veins extend into the groin area. If you want pantyhose, you will pay the difference between the two lengths.
- You should be able to put on and take off your compression stockings yourself before taking a pair home. If not, the vendor will call your authorizer.
- Please note: compression stockings are non-refundable for sanitary reasons (unless you have been fitted incorrectly).

#### 4. Do I pay for my compression stockings?

- AADL provides assistance for up to three pairs of ready-made compression stockings every 12 months. However, it is preferred that you receive one pair of compression stockings at first to ensure you are able to wear the stockings and they fit properly.
- Under the program, clients pay 25 per cent of the cost of the stockings to the AADL vendor. The AADL vendor will bill AADL directly for the remaining 75 per cent.
- There are exemptions from cost-share for low-income clients. Consult your AADL authorizer for information on cost-share exemption.
- The AADL program pays a pre-determined price for compression stockings, called a benchmark price, that each AADL vendor must be able to provide. If you want a more expensive brand or a different length, you will have to pay the cost difference between the benchmark price and the price of the product you choose.
- AADL does not reimburse clients or pay for compression stockings purchased before an authorization has been done by an AADL authorizer.

#### Caring for your stockings

Compression stockings should be hand washed daily. Do not wring out the stockings or put them in the washer or dryer. Press water out by placing them between layers of towels and hang to dry. Refer to the instructions in your product brochure for more specific instructions about the care of your stockings.

NOTE: Lotion can break down the fibres in your stockings so it is best to moisturize your legs at night to allow the moisturizer to absorb into your skin.

If you have problems putting on or taking off your compression stockings, contact your AADL authorizer or vendor. They may suggest stocking aids to help you, or a family member may have to assist you. Wearing rubber gloves and keeping your finger and toenails trimmed can help to prevent tearing or holes.

### Follow-up

After you receive your first pair of compression stockings, an AADL authorizer may contact you and ask the following questions:

- Are you wearing your compression stockings every day?
- Are you able to put on and take off your compression stockings?
- Do your compression stockings fit?
- Does your leg swelling continue to be reduced?

### Replacements

You will have to see an AADL authorizer every 24 months (2 years from date of purchase) to be reassessed and renew your compression stockings authorization. Under special circumstances, you may need to see an authorizer every 12 months. If this is necessary, your authorizer will let you know when you need to return.

The AADL program does not replace compression stockings if they are lost, stolen, damaged or ripped. Under these circumstances, clients are responsible for their replacement.

For more information contact your regional health authority or:

**Alberta Aids to Daily Living Program**

**10th Floor, Milner Building**

**10040 - 104 Street**

**Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0Z2**

**Phone: 780-427-0731 in Edmonton**

**Toll free: 310-0000, then 780-427-0731 when prompted**

**Fax: 780-422-0968**

Deaf/hearing impaired callers within Alberta using a TTY can reach the provincial government by dialing 427-9999 in Edmonton or 1-800-232-7215 throughout Alberta.

