

Measuring for Compression Stockings

Compression garments are the most important tool to ensure preservation and improvement of the therapeutic success achieved during treatment with Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT). To select the correct garment ([ready-made or custom made](#)), [compression level](#) and, if necessary, fastening systems, the patients age, physical abilities (and limitations), lifestyle, type of lymphedema and any other conditions must be taken into consideration. It is of utmost importance that a compression garment is chosen that meets the patient's individual needs.

Most manufacturers provide various styles of compression garments in a variety of sizes. Custom garments should be ordered if the extremity is either too large or too small for standard size garments, or if a single compression garment with a compression level of more than 50 mm/Hg is necessary.

Who should measure?

While it would be best that a trained individual with a thorough understanding of lymphedema and its implications takes the measurements and teach patients how to wear them properly, it is sometimes necessary that patients measure on their own if they buy ready-made stockings from an online retailer for example.

When should the measurements be taken?

At the end of the intensive phase of CDT (phase I), when the extremity is at its most reduced state. Ideally, the measurements should be taken early in the morning when the leg is smallest, at the end of a treatment session, or after the compression bandages have been removed.

How to measure

While the sizes on some light support stockings are determined by shoe size or height and weight, the sizes on most compression stockings are determined using a few simple measurements.

Sizing for medical compression stockings is based on the circumferences at specific points and the length of the leg. Measurements are taken with a tape measure, which should be applied straight; a twisted or crooked tape measure will result in inaccurate measurements. If a tape measure is unavailable, a string and a ruler may be used; the circumferential and length measurements can be taken with the string and the individual lengths of the string then measured with the ruler.

It is recommended to mark the leg with a non-permanent, non-toxic marker at each circumferential measurement made. The length measurement is then taken even with the floor, along the leg, up to the respective circumference point. The individual measurements should be written down on a notepad and compared with the sizing chart of the manufacturer of choice to determine garment size and length.

If the affected leg is unusually shaped, the positions of the circumferential and length measuring points should be taken on the unaffected leg first. This technique helps to identify the position of these points on the affected leg.

Measuring for a ready-made knee-high compression stocking

Ankle Circumference



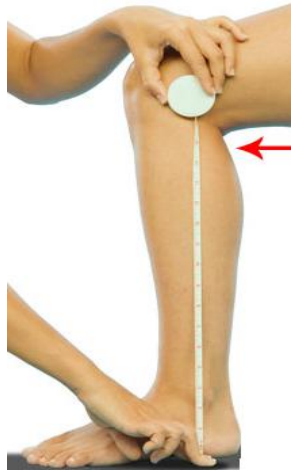
Place the measuring tape at the narrowest part of the ankle, just above the ankle bone and measure the circumference. Write this measurement down and label it as "ankle measurement".

Calf Circumference



Measure the largest part of the calf. You may need to search for the largest part of the calf by measuring above and below the middle of the calf; the objective here is to get the largest measurement. Write this measurement down and label it as "calf measurement".

Length Measurement



Measure from the floor to the bend behind the knee; do not wear shoes as you will get an inaccurate measurement. Make sure that you are measuring just below the bend of the knee. Measuring too high or too close to the bend of the knee may result in a stocking too long for your lower leg, especially if your length measurement is right on the edge of the short and long length threshold.

This measurement determines the length of your leg - write it down. You can now compare your measurements with the sizing chart of the manufacturer of your choice to determine the size and length of your stocking.

When you receive your stockings, it is important to put your stockings on first thing in the morning, right after the shower. By putting on your stockings before you swell, you can control your swelling easier.

Measuring for a ready-made thigh-high compression stocking

Ankle Circumference



Place the measuring tape at the narrowest part of the ankle, just above the ankle bone and measure the circumference. Write this measurement down and label it as "ankle measurement".

Calf Circumference



Measure the largest part of the calf. You may need to search for the largest part of the calf by measuring above and below the middle of the calf; the objective here is to get the largest measurement. Write this measurement down and label it as "calf measurement".

Thigh Circumference



Find the widest part of your thigh - right under your buttocks. Measure the circumference of this part of your thigh. Write this measurement down and label it as thigh measurement.

Measure the length of the leg.



For thigh high or pantyhose garments measure the length of leg from the top of the thigh to floor behind the heel. This is the length of your leg - write it down on a notepad. You can now compare your measurements with the sizing chart for the brand of stockings you've chosen to determine the size and length of your stocking.

When you receive your stockings, it is important to put your stockings on first thing in the morning, right after the shower. By putting on your stockings before you swell, you can control your swelling easier.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.lymphedemablog.com/2011/05/12/compression-garments-for-lymphedema-custom-or-ready-made/>

<http://www.lymphedemablog.com/2010/09/19/the-role-of-compression-garments-in-the-treatment-of-lymphedema/>