Understanding Compression Bandaging
Introduction
This leaflet will provide advice for patients who need compression bandaging.

What is Compression Bandaging?
Compression bandaging is a special type of bandage which provides support to help treat venous leg ulcers and manage leg swelling.

These bandages provide support for the veins which enable the valves to work more efficiently. This will improve the blood flow back up the leg and so reduce the overload in the small vessels of the lower limb. This is an essential part of your treatment and research has proven that compression bandaging is an effective way of healing specific types of ulceration. There are different types of compression bandaging and your nurse will prescribe the one most appropriate for you.

How do I know that the bandage is safe?
Before application of the bandage the nurse will complete a full leg ulcer assessment including an arterial Doppler assessment. Bandages should never be applied without this assessment. This will ensure the bandage is both safe and suitable for you.

How are Compression Bandages applied?
- The bandages are applied after the wound has been dressed.
- Prior to applying your compression bandages, all bony prominences must be protected with special wool padding. A layer of tubular bandage will be applied next to the skin from toe-to-knee to prevent any irritation from the padding.
- All bandaging layers must be applied from the base of the toe to below the knee. This prevents your foot and top of calf from any swelling.
- Your bandage should feel firm but not tight. This will allow you to move your ankle and foot freely.
- At the early stage of your treatment you may notice the bandage has become slightly loose. This is normal as your leg swelling is reducing. However if there is a significant slippage you must make arrangements to have the bandage reapplied as soon as possible.
Footwear
It is important to wear a well-fitting shoe. You may need to use a larger size temporarily to facilitate the bandages. Laced-up shoes will give you better support than slippers. Effective footwear will allow for better mobility, this is essential as exercise is an essential part of your leg ulcer treatment.

Commonly Asked Questions
Q: How long will it take for my leg ulcer to heal with these compression bandages?
A: This is variable, dependent on individual circumstances. Some people will progress to healing quicker than others, e.g., some people will heal within 12 weeks; others can take longer.

Q: Can I have a shower?
A: Yes, but you must wear special protective equipment to keep the bandage dry. Ask your nurse for information about this equipment which is available on prescription. Your bandage must be kept dry at all times.

Q: What if the bandages are causing pain?
A: If the bandages cause you pain it is vital that you contact a health care professional as soon as possible. They may advise you to remove your outer bandage until you can be seen by your nurse.

Q: Can I remove my bandages?
A: No. The bandage can only be applied by properly trained staff. In order to work efficiently the bandage should not be disturbed.

Q: Will a firm bandage cut off my blood supply?
A: No. The assessment which the nurse carried out means that the arteries are strong enough to manage the level of compression delivered by the bandage.
Email: info@northerntrust.hscni.net
Website: www.northerntrust.hscni.net

This document is available, on request, in accessible formats, including Braille, CD, audio cassette and minority languages.