Care of Your Unna Boot Dressing

What Is an Unna Boot?

An unna boot dressing is a commercially prepared gauze bandage saturated with zinc oxide. This gauze is covered with an outer wrap to provide support and compression. It is used to treat slow healing foot, heel, or leg ulcers by decreasing the swelling in the leg. This dressing may be left in place from one to seven days.

Application

Your leg and wound will be washed before the unna boot is applied. An antibiotic cream, antiseptic or dressing may be applied over the wound before the unna boot is applied. The unna dressing will be wrapped from the toes to the knee. The dressing in the area of the wound may be three or four layers thick. It will dry in three to four hours but will never be as hard as a cast.

Care of the Unna Boot Dressing After Application

What to do:

1. Observe toes for change in color (blue, darkening or white), temperature (cold), swelling, or lack of sensation (numbness).

2. Keep leg elevated above level of your heart if possible when reclining or lying down. Avoid sitting at a ninety-degree angle for too long a time. This position affects the blood supply to your legs.

3. Keep unna boot dressing dry. (Put heavy plastic bag taped above and below the boot around it when showering. Keep your leg out of the tub if taking a tub bath.) If the unna boot dressing becomes wet or soiled please contact the clinic for further instructions.

4. Walk daily as recommended by your health care provider. You may need to obtain a slipper/shoe that is 1-2 sizes larger.

5. Individual instructions:_____________________________________________
What Not to Do:

1. Do not ignore ANY of the following signs and symptoms of the toes:
   - cold
   - discoloration
   - swelling
   - numbness
   - severe pain

2. Do not put any object into the boot or under the dressing to relieve itching.

3. Do not walk long distances until the boot dries.

What to Do for Problems

If you develop cold, discoloration, swelling, numbness or pain:

1. Elevate the leg above the level of your heart while reclining or lying down.

2. If the problem persists:
   - Gently unwrap the outer dressing.
   - Pour warm water over the unna wrap.
   - Gently unwrap the unna dressing

3. Call your clinic nurse, nurse practitioner, or physician regarding problems at the numbers listed below:

Call your health care provider for advice on itching.

RN________________ Nurse Practitioner________________ MD_________________

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©2015. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4410.