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Compression: Important – But Myths Around

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by *Tim Cawfield, M.D., Rocky Mountain Vein Institute*

Phlebologist, Board Certified Family Medicine

There has been an increasing trend among professional and amateur athletes to wear graduated compression stockings and compression sleeves during exercise. There are a lot of myths surrounding the benefits of wearing graduated compression stockings for different endurance activities. At Rocky Mountain Vein Institute, we recognize the importance of compression stockings. I would like to dispel a few myths regarding the benefits these compression garments and confirm other benefits.

Belief #1 – wearing graduated compression stockings will allow you to run faster. This is a myth. There is wide agreement between studies designed to detect improved running times. There has never been consistent, statistically significant improvement in running times.

Belief #2—wearing graduated compression stocking will allow you to cycle faster. I did find a recent study that demonstrated a 1.2% improvement in cycle times and a 3.3% improvement in power output. This is a modest improvement, but for a close race, a 1.2% time decrease could make a difference in your finish place.

Belief #3—wearing tighter graduated compression stockings will offer more performance benefits than lighter grade compression. This is also a myth. One study showed that higher grade compression stockings not only did not improve running times, but they were associated with increased discomfort during running and decreased muscle strength after running.

Belief #4—wearing graduated compression stockings will decrease muscle soreness after running. This is true. There was a study that examined perceived muscle soreness after running. Soreness ratings 24 hours after exercise were significantly higher in study subjects that did not wear knee-high, graduated compression stockings.

While not a perfect remedy, these stockings do seem to improve recovery after running. This should have implications not only for elite or semi-elite runners, but also for individuals who wish to embark on exercise regimes but may be deterred due to the associated pain following exercise.

For cycling, graduated compression may improve power output during cycling and also as measured during measured jumping. This should have important implications for any cycling athlete who wishes to gain a competitive edge.

For further information, visit www.rmvein.com and learn more or stop by Rocky Mountain Vein Institute on the Pueblo Riverwalk — and visit with one of our knowledgeable staff.

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