Procedure Guideline for Applying Elastic Stockings

1. Gather the necessary equipment and supplies.
2. Perform hand hygiene.
3. Provide for the patient’s privacy.
4. Introduce yourself to the patient and family, if present.
5. Verify the health care provider’s orders for elastic stockings.
6. Identify the patient using two identifiers.
7. Explain the procedure to the patient and the reason for wearing the elastic stockings.
8. Place the patient in the supine position with the head of the bed elevated. Raise the bed to a comfortable working height.
9. If the patient has been sitting or walking, elevate the patient’s legs and feet for approximately 15-20 minutes before applying the stockings.
10. Assess the legs for scratches and cuts. Make sure the legs are warm and assess pedal and popliteal pulses. Evaluate the patient for risk factors and for Virchow’s triad.
11. Take measurements as needed to obtain the appropriate size. For thigh high, measure the length of the legs from the heel to the gluteal fold. For knee high, measure from the heel to the popliteal. Then measure the circumference of the calves. Measure the thighs if indicated for thigh high stockings. Compare the measurements to the size chart on the manufacturer's package.
12. If needed, bathe and dry the legs. To make the stockings easier to apply, you may apply a small amount of powder or cornstarch to the patient’s legs in accordance with agency policy.
13. Begin to apply the elastic stockings by first turning the elastic stocking inside out. Do so by placing your hand into the sock as far as the heel pocket. Then pull the sock inside out, but not all the way through.
14. Place the foot of the elastic stocking over the patient’s toes, making sure the stocking is smooth.
15. Slide the remaining portion of the stocking over the patient’s foot, keeping the toes covered. Make sure the stocking fits in the toe and that the heel is in the heel pocket. The stocking will now be right side out.
16. Slide the stocking up until it is fully extended over the calf. Be sure that the stocking is smooth and that there are no ridges or wrinkles in the fabric. Instruct the patient to avoid rolling stockings down. Repeat this process on the other leg.
17. Help the patient into a comfortable position, and place toiletries and personal items within reach.
18. Place the call light within easy reach, and make sure the patient knows how to use it to summon assistance.
19. To ensure the patient’s safety, raise the appropriate number of side rails and lower the bed to the lowest position.
20. Dispose of used supplies and equipment. Leave the patient’s room tidy.
21. Remove and dispose of gloves, if used. Perform hand hygiene.
22. Document and report the patient’s response and expected or unexpected outcomes.
23. For follow up care, remove the stockings at least once per shift for as long as necessary to assess for irritation. Wash and air-dry stockings as necessary.