

When you wake up, your feet and ankles are fine. But by the end of the day, they're swollen and wearing shoes is painful. The swelling, called dependent edema, results from a build-up of fluids in your skin tissue. During the day, gravity pulls the fluids to your feet and ankles, causing them to swell.

To reduce swelling:

- *Cut back on sodium* - Sodium causes fluid retention.
- *Maintain proper weight* - Excess weight slows circulation of body fluids and puts extra pressure on your veins, causing fluid build-up.
- *Get some exercise* - Regular exercise improves circulation in your feet and legs.
- *Put your feet up* - Place them at least 12 inches above the level of your heart. Do this for 10-15 minutes, three or four times a day.
- *Use support stockings* - They compress your legs, promoting circulation and limiting gravitational movement of excess fluid. Elastic stockings are available at most medical supply drug stores.
- *Take a break when traveling* - Long periods of sitting can promote swelling in your feet and ankles. Get up and walk around at least every one or two hours.

If swelling is persistent, or accompanied by shortness of breath and weight gain, see your family doctor or cardiologist.