

Varicose

Veins

By Katelyn Sives



Varicose veins, although proven to be medically problematic for some and cosmetically concerning for others, are a natural response as we age and our body chemistry changes. As unsightly as these veins may be, they can be found anywhere in the body but are most commonly developed in the thigh and foot area. About fifty percent of men and women over the age of fifty are likely to develop varicose veins; however, according to studies, varicose veins are more prevalent in women. Depending on the severity of varicose veins, they may appear as purplish-blue knotted lumps under the skin's surface.

Varicose veins emerge when a valve inside a vein becomes damaged. When a valve does not function properly, it restricts blood flow that would normally run in the direction toward the heart. This causes the vein to pool blood, enlarge and swell. Experts believe that inherited conditions and strain on the body, such as constipation, chronic coughing, urinary retention, and pregnancy (increased stress in the abdomen) may all be factors in defective valves. Additional factors include prolonged standing, trauma to the leg, hormonal changes, obesity, and aging.

In some cases, varicose veins are paired with symptoms that include aching and throbbing in the legs and feet, itching, mild swelling, and in severe cases, skin ulcerations. If veins cause discomfort, it is important to take proper self-care measures to relieve pain. Self-care measures include exercise, avoidance of prolonged standing, and elevating legs while resting. These activities allow blood to flow toward the heart, reducing pressure on varicose veins. Wearing compression stockings is also a common self-care measure used to reduce inflammation. Compression stockings apply pressure to varicose veins in gradients (I, II or III) and have been proven to reduce swelling and offer relief from discomfort.

Other natural remedies may help to lessen pressure of varicose veins. Increasing fiber intake may be bene-

ficial to easing pain, as fiber helps to relieve the inflamed veins in the pelvic area caused by constipation. Vegetables, fruits, and whole grains are all sources of fiber which help to alleviate stress in the abdomen where stresses tend to develop.

Using a cold compress and soaking feet and legs in warm water may also be helpful in reducing swelling and improving circulation.

Sometimes self-care measures are not enough and veins can become too painful or unpleasant. A corrective procedure may be the only leeway to treat the appearance and discomfort of varicose veins. *Sclerotherapy* is a common multi-step treatment in which a liquid substance is injected directly into veins with a small needle. This substance causes the vein wall to swell, adhere together, and seal shut, causing the vein to stop blood flow and turn into scar tissue. Immediately following this procedure, persons receiving treatment are able to return to normal activity. To correct varicose veins completely, this procedure may be performed two to four times every four to six weeks. Although Sclerotherapy is a common procedure, other treatments are available as well:

VNUS closure and Endovenous Laser Treatments.

It is important to contact a doctor if varicose veins cause more than discomfort, do not improve with self-care measures, and if complications worsen. While varicose veins are sometimes a natural process to aging, they can be corrected if cosmetic or medical concern becomes too great.

Places to treat varicose veins:

Dr. George Tietjen, MD
507 High Street
Honesdale, PA 18431-1733
(570) 253-2620

Dr. J. Gary Wroblewski
75 N Scott St
Carbondale, PA 18407
(570) 281-9000

Advanced Dermatology
303 West Harford Street
Milford, PA 18337-1116
(570) 296-4000