

HOW TO PREVENT VARICOSE VEINS

Weakening in the vessel wall causes abnormal, dilated blood vessels referred to as varicose veins. People have swollen, twisted clusters of blue or purple veins often appearing on the legs and in the pelvic area. They may be surrounded by thin, red capillaries known as spider veins.

Some people do not have symptoms but may be concerned about the appearance of the veins. Others may notice tiredness, burning, throbbing, tingling, itching, swelling, cramping, soreness, aching, brown discoloration, heaviness, or ulcers in the legs. Symptoms get worse after standing or sitting. In women, symptoms can be worse during menstruation or pregnancy. Sometimes varicose veins can form a painful blood clot, referred to as superficial phlebitis (inflammation of a vein).

Varicose and spider veins may require medical treatment. If varicose veins make walking or standing painful, you should ask your doctor for advice. You also should call your doctor if a sore develops on or near a varicose vein or if your feet or ankles swell. In some cases, varicose veins can be harmful to your health when they are associated with conditions such as venous stasis ulcers, fungal and bacterial infections, thrombophlebitis, or venous hemorrhage.

During a physical exam, the doctor will check your legs while standing. Your doctor also may request that you have a Doppler scan, an ultrasound exam to check the blood flow in the veins near the skin's surface (called superficial) and the deep veins.

The goals of treatment are to reduce symptoms and reduce the risk of complications. Wearing properly fitting support hose (also called compression stockings) is the most conservative approach for treating varicose veins, especially when the veins are symptomatic. Compression stockings can be purchased at some pharmacies and medical supply stores and come in various styles including below-the-knee, above-the-knee and pantyhose styles. They also come in different compressions varying from 8 to 10 mmHg, up to 40 to 50 mmHg. Your doctor can recommend the compression that is right for you.

Other conservative treatment methods include: practicing good skin hygiene; losing weight if you are overweight; exercising regularly (especially walking); avoiding prolonged periods of sitting or standing; elevating your legs while sitting and sleeping. When you need to stand for long periods, take frequent breaks - sit down and elevate your feet.

Dr. Anjani Thakur, who completed his training at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), is at the forefront of newest option utilizing information from research studies in venous diseases, including varicose veins. His wife, Dr. Vijaya Thakur, who completed her training at University of Southern California, USC, has special interest in aspects of vascular medicine, dermatology, radiology and vascular surgery to come up with an integrated plan to accurately diagnose and effectively treat patients with varicose

veins. They study the newest, most current treatments available for venous diseases. Venous specialists at Valley Veins treat hundreds of patients each year with varicose veins.

Treatment for varicose veins at Valley Veins is tailored for each patient depending on general health, age and the severity of the condition. Treatment options include sclerotherapy, laser surgery, endovenous thermal ablation (radiofrequency [VNUS] or laser), surgical vein stripping, endoscopic perforator vein surgery and other procedures. Patients may receive a combination of treatments, and most patients also use self-care therapies such as compression stockings. Currently, all insurance plans cover treatment for venous damage, including Medicare, Medi-Cal, private insurance plans, and Central Coast Alliance. A referral is not required for Medicare, Medi-Cal, or most PPO plans. Valley Veins does free varicose vein screening and information sessions. They may be contacted at (209) 656-7400.