

Varicose Veins

Varicose veins hurt your legs and your self-esteem, but our gentle, minimally invasive treatment can take away the pain. The unsightly veins range from the blue splotches of spider veins to the thick, ropey and twisted dark varicose veins that can make standing and walking painful, have much in common.

They're very common: 20 percent of all adults, and 50 percent of adults over 50, experience varicose veins, predominantly women. If left untreated, varicose veins can progress to serious health problems.

Most importantly, varicose veins are treatable with new, non-invasive procedures that are quick, virtually painless, and require little or no recovery time. Our vascular surgeons and interventional radiologists work together to evaluate and effectively treat serious, painful and even dangerous major varicose veins.

What are varicose veins?

Varicose veins are enlarged veins in the legs near the surface of the skin, ranging in size. Most people associate varicose veins with prominent, swollen, twisted, and ropelike veins wrapping their legs, often dark blue in color – and often quite painful. These are symptomatic varicose veins. They develop over time, with contributing factors such as:

- Age
- Family history
- Pregnancy
- Weight gain
- Prolonged standing

These veins are caused by weakened valves in the leg veins that flow blood back to your heart. When the valves weaken, blood pools and builds pressure in the leg veins,

causing them to swell, expand and twist as the walls of the veins are weakened – and the weakened valves and veins are prone to clots or hemorrhaging, which is why treatment is so important. Some people do not have any troublesome symptoms at first while others experience mild or serious symptoms including:

Mild symptoms:

- Swelling in your feet and ankles
- Heaviness, burning, aching, tiredness, or pain in your legs, particularly when you stand or sit for a long time
- Itchy skin over the vein

More serious symptoms:

- Leg swelling
- Swelling and calf pain after you sit or stand for long periods of time
- Skin changes, such as skin color or dry, thin or scaling skin
- Inflammation
- Open sores or excessive bleeding after a minor injury

Varicose veins may also be a sign of a blockage in deeper veins called deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a serious, sometimes deadly condition in which blood clots forming in your leg veins can break loose and move to your lungs, blocking blood flow (pulmonary embolism).

How are varicose veins diagnosed?

Varicose veins are easy to see, especially when you stand up. Your doctor will check your legs for tender areas, swelling, skin color changes, sores, and other signs of skin breakdown. If you have signs of a deep vein

problem like DVT or plan to have treatment for spider veins or symptomatic varicose veins, you may need more tests, such as a vascular ultrasound exam.

How are varicose veins treated?

Not all varicose veins require clinical treatment. In mild cases, home treatment may be all you require to ease symptoms and keep the varicose veins from getting worse. You can:

- Exercise to strengthen the muscles and veins of the legs
- Wear compression stockings to improve blood flow and limit vein swelling
- Prop up your legs to allow the blood to flow out of the legs easier
- Avoid long periods of sitting or standing

What are the minimally-invasive treatments?

To treat more serious varicose vein problems, we offer several effective and minimally invasive solutions; endovenous thermal ablation, ambulatory phlebectomy and ultrasound-guided sclerotherapy. After diagnosis, we will discuss options so you can choose the treatment that best suits your needs. Although effective, no varicose vein treatment, whether surgical or minimally invasive, can prevent new varicose veins from developing in the future.

What is endovenous thermal ablation?

Endovenous thermal ablation (EVTA) is an alternative to surgically removing varicose veins. We use ultrasound to guide a small catheter or laser fiber into the vein. The catheter delivers just enough laser or radiowave heat to cause the vein to close, collapse and seal shut, without affecting nearby tissue. The treated vein is absorbed by the body and disappears within a few months. EVTA not only treats your large varicose veins, but also eliminates

many smaller unsightly ones. The procedure is generally performed with just a local anesthetic and takes about 40 minutes. You will be able to walk and resume most normal activity immediately after the procedure, wearing compression stockings for a few weeks, and most people return to work the next day.

What is ambulatory phlebectomy?

Ambulatory phlebectomy is minimally invasive surgery to remove smaller varicose veins just under the skin through tiny incisions in the skin, using a special set of tools. Often, the incisions are so small that after a few months, they completely disappear. The procedure is done under conscious sedation and usually takes one to two hours or less, (If you have an extended network of varicose veins, you may need two or three sessions.) Recovery is quick: you can walk and resume most normal activity immediately, just wearing compression stockings for a couple of weeks.

What is ultrasound-guided sclerotherapy?

Ultrasound-guided sclerotherapy treats large networks of veins just below the surface of the skin and is a gentle and highly effective treatment for spider veins. Using ultrasound, we guide a small needle into the vein and inject a fluid that scars and closes the vein. Within a few weeks, treated varicose veins fade away. While more than one treatment may sometimes be required to fully treat the problem areas, sclerotherapy can be very effective at improving the appearance of your legs.

Will my health insurance cover the treatment?

Most health insurance plans typically cover treatment of the more serious, symptomatic varicose veins. Some health insurance plans consider treatment of spider veins as cosmetic surgery and will not cover it.

If your diagnosis indicates that you need a specific treatment, our staff will submit all relevant information to your insurance company for pre-authorization, or provide you with the approximate cost of treatment.

Call (804) 828-6986 for more information or to schedule a consultation.