

Patient Information Sheet on Varicose Veins

What Are Varicose Veins?

Varicose veins are enlarged, bulging veins usually found in the leg. They often appear twisted and cord-like, and tend to be blue to dark purple in color.

Who Gets Varicose Veins?

In the United States, more than 30 million adults over 40 years old have varicose veins. Women are twice as likely as men to have them. You may be more likely to get varicose veins if other members of your family have them, if you are overweight or if you work at a job that requires you to stand for long periods of time. Varicose veins are sometimes part of getting older.

Why Do Varicose Veins Occur?

Varicose veins can happen when a vein is partially blocked or when the tiny valves inside the vein become weak. This causes blood to back up and make the veins swell.

There are many things that contribute to getting varicose veins, including:

- Getting older
- Being a woman
- Being tall
- A family history of vein problems
- Being overweight
- Pregnancy
- Sitting or standing for a long time

What Are Common Symptoms of Varicose Veins?

Varicose veins may not cause any problems, or they may make you feel so bad that you miss work or become unable to do the things you enjoy. Symptoms of varicose veins include:

- Leg pain or aching
- A feeling of heaviness
- Restless legs
- Cramps
- Throbbing
- Feeling tired
- Itchiness
- Tingling
- Swelling
- Skin changes
- Ulcers (open sores)

What Happens If Varicose Veins Are Not Treated?

Some people believe that varicose veins are only a cosmetic problem and are not a priority when they talk with their doctors. However, varicose veins can be a real medical concern. Untreated varicose veins tend to get worse over time and can lead to serious problems that might require hospitalization.

How Are Varicose Veins Treated?

Talk with your doctor about taking care of your legs. Managing the symptoms of varicose veins may be as easy as using compression stockings and avoiding long periods without moving around.

Other options may include procedures such as surgery or other methods. If you think symptoms you are having may be related to varicose veins, it is important to talk to your healthcare provider. He or she can diagnose your condition and determine which treatment plan may be right for you.

References:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health website. Varicose veins and spider veins FAQs. <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/varicose-spider-veins.pdf>. Accessed June 2014.
2. Mayo Clinic website. Varicose veins. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/varicose-veins/DS00256>. Accessed June 2014.
3. Gloviczki P, Comerota AJ, Dalsing MC, et al. The care of patients with varicose veins and associated chronic venous diseases: clinical practice guidelines of the Society for Vascular Surgery and the American Venous Forum. *J Vasc Surg*. 2011;53(5 suppl):2S-48S.
4. Fronek H. *Fundamentals of Phlebology: Venous Disease for Clinicians*. 2nd ed. London, England: RSM Press; 2008.
5. National Institutes of Health. Venous insufficiency. MedlinePlus website. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000203.htm>. Accessed June 2014.
6. Dean M. London Perspective: End of a comprehensive NHS? [News & Comments]. *Lancet*. 1991;337:351-352.
7. Mason H, Baker R, Donaldson C. Understanding public preferences for prioritizing health care interventions in England: does the type of health gain matter? *J Health Serv Res Policy*. 2011;16:81-89.
8. Sarin S, Shields DA, Farrah J, Scurr JH, Coleridge-Smith PD. Does venous function deteriorate in patients waiting for varicose vein surgery? *J R Soc Med*. 1993;86:21-23.

Varithena[®]
(polidocanol injectable foam) 1%

