

# To Your Health

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## How to address varicose veins

Men and women alike suffer from varicose veins, which can be a cosmetic nuisance or a symptom of a serious medical condition. New varicose vein treatments are enabling individuals to live happier lives.

Varicose veins are enlarged, gnarled veins that can resemble the twisted roots of a tree. They develop when the one-way valves in veins that carry blood to the heart are faulty. Blood backs up in the veins as a result, and stretches the vein.

According to experts from Meridian Health, varicose veins are very common and affect half of all Americans ages 50 and older. But they're not just a concern for seniors. Anyone can develop varicose veins, but women are at a greater risk than men.

Varicose veins typically do not have any symptoms, except for the visual presence of deep blue or purple, bulging veins that largely occur on the legs and feet. However, aches in the legs, heavy feeling, itching around veins, or throbbing may also occur. Similar to varicose veins are spider veins, which are smaller and closer to the skin surface.

Pregnancy, age and stretching of the veins are contributors to varicose veins. Being overweight or standing for long durations of time are other contributors, as is wearing restrictive clothing.

There are a number of treatments that have been developed for varicose veins. During sclerotherapy, a solution is injected into a small or medium-sized vein to scar it and close it up. Eventually the vein will shrivel and fade. A similar procedure is done with lasers to shrink the vein without the need for needles or surgery. Catheter procedures use a heated tube inserted into the vein to collapse the vein and seal it shut. Vein stripping involves removing large veins through several small incisions. It is usually an outpatient procedure but will require a surgery.

In most cases, blood will naturally reroute to other veins in the legs after one of these procedures. Much of the blood flow in the legs is carried out by deeper veins. Individuals who undergo these procedures can usually walk directly after the surgery and full recovery is only a matter of a couple of weeks or more.

Feeling good about oneself involves being happy about what is on the inside and outside. Hiding legs and feet due to varicose veins can be embarrassing and uncomfortable, especially as the weather warms. Talk to a doctor about a recommendation to a vascular surgeon who can offer treatments for varicose veins.



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