

Getting a Leg Up on **Leg Veins**

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You work out and have great toned legs but still feel uncomfortable in shorts or a bathing suit because of either little purple veins that look like bruises or ropey bulging "varicose veins." Leg veins are troubling to many patients.

Some can lead to medical problems but most are just unsightly. Most patients complain that they look like they are bruised and often feel very self-conscious about wearing clothing that reveals their legs. The good news is the dermatologists are at the forefront of treatment of many kinds of leg veins, which can be treated comfortably in the office with no down time. Here are some of the most important FAQs about leg veins.

Who gets leg veins?

Women are the main sufferers from leg veins, outnumbering men by two to one. The most important factor is heredity. Often leg veins can present early in life if there is a family history. Other factors that may affect leg veins are pregnancies and jobs that require standing for long periods of time such as teachers, nurses, hairdressers and clergy. Use of medications containing estrogen such as contraceptive pills or estrogen replacement drugs can also worsen the condition. Weight loss can actually exacerbate the appearance of leg veins.

What can you do to prevent/avoid them?

Maintaining good muscle tone from exercise helps to promote blood flow through the veins and back to the heart. Wearing a light compression stocking when you are going to be standing for long periods of time is very helpful.

What happens if you don't treat leg veins?

For tiny "spider" veins medical consequences are rare. About half of patients with larger varicose vessels will develop some type of complication ranging from decrease venous flow to ulceration, swelling, or discoloration.

How can they be treated?

One of the most successful treatments for all sizes of leg veins is sclerotherapy or injection therapy. A tiny needle is inserted into the vessel just below the skin and a solution is injected into the vessel. Over time blood flow stops in that vessel and it is reabsorbed by the body.

What about laser treatments?

At present lasers are only recommended to treat the smallest vessels. Generally they are used after the patient has been treated with Sclerotherapy for the tiniest left over vessels. Laser treatments have produced many more unwanted side effects and are generally not used by most leg vein experts.



And there options for treating bigger vessels?

There are two exciting procedures that can be performed in the office setting for larger vessels. One is called Ambulatory Phlebectomy and involves extracting the varicose vessel through the skin in a painless office procedure. Patients return immediately to all normal activity. For certain vessels, laser closure techniques offer the chance to shut down large vessels.

How long do treated vessels improve in appearance?

Sclerotherapy vessels typically disappear anywhere from a few weeks up to several months. Ambulatory Phlebectomy and laser closure procedures provide almost immediate results. For best results, I usually tell patients to start treatments about four to six months prior to spring/summer months.

Is there any after care?

Most leg vein treatments require at least a compression hose for several weeks. However, a phlebectomy may require wrapping the leg for up to a week.

Is the vessel treatment permanent?

The treatments give permanent results, however the tendency to develop leg veins is lifelong so it is possible that maintenance treatments will be required in the future

How can I find a doctor to treat my leg veins?

Many doctors treat leg veins. Dermatologists tend to use a more non-invasive approach. You can find a dermatologist who specializes in leg vein treatment by visiting the website of the American Society for Derasurgery at www.aboutskin-surgery.com



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