



# VARICOSE VEINS



## WHAT ARE VARICOSE VEINS?

Varicose veins are veins that are swollen, twisted, or stretched. Veins in the legs and pelvic area are most often affected. Varicose veins are more common in women and symptoms usually appear before age 40.

## HOW DOES IT OCCUR?

Factors that may contribute to this condition are pregnancy, constipation, excess weight, height, standing on your feet for long periods of time, and wearing tight underwear, garters, or corsets. The condition tends to run in families.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

There may be no symptoms, or you may have:

- swelling in the legs
- muscle cramps and aching
- legs muscles that tire easily
- soreness behind the knee
- frequently, itching around the veins

## HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

The doctor will give you a physical exam and check your legs while you are standing. Your doctor may also request that you have a Doppler scan, an ultrasound exam to monitor blood flow.

## HOW IS IT TREATED?

Many people require only elastic stockings for support during daily activities. Regular walking, standing only when necessary, and elevating your feet while sitting may keep your varicose veins from getting worse.

One treatment is to inject an irritating liquid into the veins. This causes the varicose veins to close and forces the blood to flow through healthier veins. In selected cases, a surgeon may need to remove a vein.

## HOW LONG WILL THE EFFECTS LAST?

They last as long as the varicose veins are present. Symptoms may get worse without treatment.



# CARE & PREVENTION

## HOW CAN I TAKE CARE OF MYSELF?

- Elevate your legs at the level higher than your heart as often as you can.
- Rest frequently.
- Elevate your feet when you sleep by propping them on a pillow.
- Wear support hose.
- Exercise regularly to increase circulation.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP PREVENT VARICOSE VEINS?

- Avoid sitting or standing in one position for a long time.
- Avoid crossing your legs while seated.
- Avoid wearing girdles, control-top pantyhose, and garters.

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IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS, CONTACT YOUR PROVIDER