



## TREATMENT OF LEG VEINS

If you suffer from problems related to varicose and spider veins, you are not alone. More than 50 million Americans suffer from some form of venous disorder. While some seek treatment for cosmetic improvements, others are looking for symptomatic relief. Whichever category you may be in, there is help available.

### What are Varicose and Spider Veins?

**Varicose veins** are swollen and/or stretched veins, which protrude in a rope like manner from the skin. Normal veins, by virtue of one-way valves, channel oxygen-poor blood back to the heart and lungs to become oxygen-rich. When a valve becomes defective it allows blood flow to leak down and collect resulting in congestion and dilation of the vein.

**Spider Veins** or broken capillaries properly named telangiectasias are small red, blue, or purple web-like or linear veins (less than 2mm in diameter, flat or raised) on the surface of the skin.

In addition to being unsightly and often embarrassing, varicose and spider veins can be symptomatic. Pain in the legs is frequently related to these abnormal leg veins. Symptoms, often made worse by prolonged standing or sitting include fatigue, heaviness, aching, burning, throbbing, itching, cramping and restlessness of the leg. In advanced cases, varicose veins can lead to skin rash, pigmentation changes, inflammation, ulceration and bleeding.

### Why me?

Heredity is the number one contributing factor causing varicose and spider veins. Women are more likely to suffer from these abnormal leg veins. Up to 50% of American women may be affected. Hormonal factors include puberty, pregnancy, menopause, the use of birth control pills: estrogen and progesterone affect the disease. Other factors that can accelerate and aggravate the appearance of veins, beyond gravity and age, include pregnancy, leg injury, obesity, lack of exercise, weight fluctuation, constriction and long periods of sitting or standing.

### When and how are veins treated?

The most commonly asked questions are: Do veins require treatment and what treatment would be best? At the Northwest Vein Center success in the treatment of varicose and spider veins is due to our comprehensive approach.

After obtaining a history and performing a physical exam, the patient undergoes a noninvasive Doppler ultrasound and color ultrasound imaging to determine areas of venous disease (dilated veins, faulty valves, and area of clot). Based on the above information, an individual treatment plan is formulated and discussed with patient. Veins that are cosmetically unappealing or cause pain or other symptoms are prime for treatment.

There are many treatment options; they can be classified into two forms:

**Supportive** measures, which include – exercise, elevation, emollient (moisturizing lotion) and elastic support hose

**Corrective** methods which include minimally invasive procedures - ambulatory surgery and phlebectomy, sclerotherapy, laser, and invasive procedure – ligation and stripping.

## **Ambulatory Surgery**

The surgical techniques to treat veins include **Venefit™ procedure** (sealing the vein closed with heat), **VenaSeal™** (sealing the vein closed with glue), **ClariVein<sup>R</sup>** (sealing the vein closed with medication and mechanical energy), **Varithena<sup>R</sup>** (sealing the vein closed with foam), **ambulatory phlebectomy** (removal of veins through tiny incisions). These minimally invasive procedures and treatments can often be performed in the office under local anesthesia with minimal discomfort and down time. Rarely is **ligation** (tying off the vein) or **stripping** (removal of a long segment of vein by pulling it out with a special instrument) needed.

## **Ambulatory microphlebectomy**

Ambulatory phlebectomy is a minimally invasive surgical technique under local anesthesia with sedation if needed. Punctures are tiny (sutures are generally not necessary) and typically leave nearly unperceivable scars. Generally, ambulatory phlebectomy is the preferred treatment for varicose veins.

## **Sclerotherapy**

Sclerotherapy (injections) can be used to treat both varicose and spider veins.

The procedure is simple. A tiny needle injects the veins with a medication that irritates the lining of the vein. Over a short time, in response to the irritation, the vein closes and is reabsorbed. The blood from the closed vein is routed to properly working veins, restoring correct circulation. Sclerotherapy relieves symptoms due to varicose and spider veins in most patients. With this procedure, veins can be dealt with at an early stage, helping to prevent further complication and unsightliness.

You may need one to several sclerotherapy sessions for any vein region and the number of injections varies per session. Generally, normal activities can be resumed after sclerotherapy. Medically prescribed support hose and/or bandages may need to be worn for one to several weeks to assist in resolution of the veins. The procedure, performed at the Northwest Vein Center, usually causes only minimal discomfort. Bruising and pigmentation may occur after sclerotherapy. If bruising occurs it usually disappears within 1-2 weeks. Although pigmentation almost always fades, it can last for several months. Scarring and other complications are rare.

## **Laser Treatment**

Laser treatment is used primarily in the treatment of the smallest spider veins or broken capillaries on our leg or face.

Laser emit a specific wavelength of high energy pulsed light, delivered in variable durations. After the energy passes through the skin, the light is absorbed by the red blood cells in the spider vein. The energy is then converted to heat, thereby injuring the vein wall. Within a few weeks the spider vein seals and disappear.

## **Ligation and Stripping Surgery**

This operation is now rarely performed, but when required, the most modern form of ligation and stripping procedures is performed in the hospital or surgery center. The surgery is typically performed under general anesthesia and takes less than one hour. Patients return home approximately two hours later, and to normal activities within a few days to a week.

### **Web sites of interest:**

[www.nwveins.com](http://www.nwveins.com)

[www.phlebology.com](http://www.phlebology.com)

### **Video:**

Modern Treatment of Varicose and Spider Veins by Vascular Medicine Center

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCk\\_hAghtvM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCk_hAghtvM)

If you have any further questions or need more information, please contact our office.

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