

All you need
to Know About
**Varicose
Veins**



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Varicose veins (plural noun)

The term most commonly used to describe large, bulging veins of the leg. These veins contain valves in them which don't work properly meaning that blood instead of going towards your heart from your legs, flows backwards. This backward flow of blood can cause pain and swelling in your leg with time, especially when standing for long periods of time.

Symptoms and Causes

UP TO 30% of the Australian population will suffer from vein disease during their lifetime.

Symptoms experienced by some patients with leg varicose veins include aching, pain or a feeling of heaviness in the legs. More serious symptoms include swelling in the lower legs, ankles and feet, a shiny, brown to blue discoloration of the skin of the lower leg, red, dry, itchy skin due to waste build up in the leg, cramping, abnormal bleeding and longer healing time with a minor injury to the area.

We are still trying to determine what causes varicose veins but are still unsure. We know that it has to do with "inflammation" of the vein wall, and vein valves eventually meaning that some of your veins don't work properly.

Family plays the biggest role on whether or not you will develop varicose veins. Look at the older adults in your family. Does your mother, father, aunt, or grandmother have varicose veins? If they do, you will probably get them, too.

Your risks approximately are

70% if both parents have them, **or** **40%** if your mother has them.



Risk Factors

The following are common risk factors associated with developing varicose veins:

01. WOMEN

Women have a greater chance of developing varicose veins than men do. Some doctors believe that this is because female hormones weaken the vessel walls and valves in the legs. So lifelong hormonal changes, pregnancy and then menopause can all contribute to the development of varicose veins in women. Taking birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy due to menopausal symptoms may also increase your risk for developing varicose veins.

02. AGE

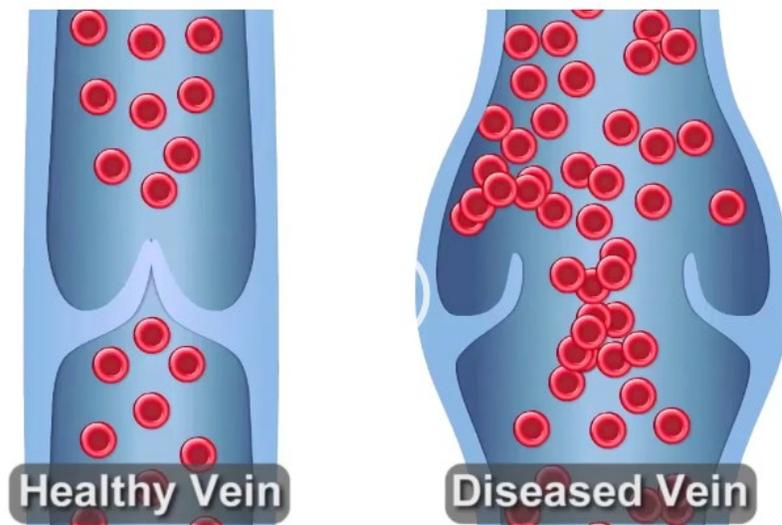
Varicose veins tend to become more prevalent as you age. This does not mean that you can't develop them at a younger age but that the risk is higher as you age.

03. CERTAIN JOBS REQUIRING LOTS OF STANDING

If you have a job where you have to stand all day and do not get to move around much, you could be at risk. Certain jobs such as hairdressing, nursing, office work, factory work means that you'll be on your legs a long time and so are more at risk of developing varicose veins. If you work in these jobs, you may want to consider getting compression socks which can reduce this risk.

04. WEIGHT

If you are overweight or obese, you have a greater chance of developing varicose veins because the extra weight puts a lot of pressure on your legs.



Relief: The Top Five Tips

01

ELEVATE YOUR LEGS

You can try to get relief from the symptoms of varicose veins by elevating your legs for several minutes throughout your day. Make sure to get them high enough that they are at a level that is above the level of your heart

- **Especially after exercise:** This will take the pressure off your legs and make it easier for the valves to work and the blood to flow smoother



02

WALK AND BUILD THOSE CALF MUSCLES

Start walking every day

Anything to keep your calf muscles in shape. The calf muscles are regular exercise tends to relieve symptoms. The veins in your leg have to fight the effects of gravity and need all the help they can get. So, keep your legs muscles in shape and well-toned.

03

KEEP YOUR WEIGHT DOWN

If you gain weight or have a few too many kilos this may contribute to varicose veins as more pressure is placed on your legs. Make sure that you eat a healthy balanced diet and avoid excessive processed foods.

04

KEEP MOVING AT WORK

Every 30 minutes

Try to keep your legs moving somehow. Flex your ankles a couple of times an hour while sitting at your desk to keep the blood pumping. Get up and walk around, too. This will not only help with blood circulation but will take some pressure off and decrease what's called dependent oedema (swelling of the lower legs, feet and ankles).

If you are on the other side of the spectrum and have a job where you rarely get to sit down, the same basic principles apply. Keep moving. When you are standing in the same position for several hours at a stretch you can do some deep knee bends or just flex your leg at the knee to help keep the blood moving.



05

WEAR COMPRESSION STOCKINGS

Whether sitting or standing at your job, wearing compression stockings will help your legs feel better by giving much needed support and aid the valves to keep the blood pumping out of your legs. See more below.

COMPRESSION STOCKINGS

— or —

BANDAGES



If you have varicose veins, the first course of treatment your doctor may suggest is the use of varicose vein compression stockings or bandages. Also known as compression socks they may help reduce the symptoms that you experience with varicose veins. Compression stockings do NOT stop the progression of the disease; they only minimize your symptoms.

WHEN?

They are simple to use, you just put them on like a regular pair of socks. Put them on in the morning and take them off at bedtime. Using a glove can help to ease them onto your legs.

Compression stockings can and should be worn when taking a trip on an airplane or taking a long trip in a car to prevent blood clots from forming.

HOW?

Get them on with no rolls or creases anywhere. Creases can cause a friction burn of the skin so it is important that there are no creases.

Varicose veins stockings, when worn correctly, apply pressure to your legs in a 'graduated' way. This means that the stockings are tighter at the ankle than they are at the knee. This gradient pressure helps the blood in your legs get pushed back up the leg to the heart.

GETTING THE RIGHT SIZE?

Using incorrectly fitted stockings will not benefit you so make sure you get them fitted by a clinic or pharmacy who specialise in stockings. You will usually need Class II compression stockings for regular use. If you have swelling you may want to try Class III.

QUALITY?

The quality of the sock is really important as generally the cheaper stockings at chemists tend not to be as comfortable. Make sure you consider a mid to upper range stocking as the investment will certainly be worth it in the long run as they can be reused.

COST?

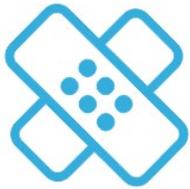
Usually stockings which are a of a good make are \$100 and above. Certain private health funds will cover you for the cost of stockings but do check with your private health fund first.

3D Tailored Stockings For Your Legs

The Vein Institute is the first vein clinic in the country to use specialised 3D technology to measure your legs for the perfect fit of compression stockings. Your legs will be precisely measured so there's no room for error or differences in measurement – which can occur with using a tape measure.

For more enquiries call **1300 981 402**.

New Surgery Free Treatments



Obviously, before beginning any varicose veins treatment, you should first talk to your doctor to tailor the right treatment for you. Not all patients with varicose veins need treatment – but this will depend on a few factors including whether you like the look of your veins or not.

Before,

stripping was the most common procedure performed and was done to remove all or part of the “**greater saphenous vein**” or “**small saphenous vein**”. These are the veins usually affected by vein disease, with the greater saphenous vein running down the inside of your thigh to your ankle and the small saphenous vein running down the middle of your calf. Complications of stripping include deep vein thrombosis, or DVT, pulmonary embolism (which happens very rarely-0.06%) and infection of the surgical site. Stripping usually means that you will have to have a general anaesthetic and go into hospital. Time off work can be a week to a month owing to bruising and swelling.



Today,

Surgery-free treatments include techniques with laser and/or medication. A laser is gently inserted into the vein using local anaesthetic (so it's not painful) and then used to seal the vein. It can be done in a doctor's rooms with no need for hospitalization. The results of laser are usually considered better than surgery by most vein experts around the world with the added benefit of not having time off work. These procedures are done in a doctor's clinic so you can usually resume your normal daily activities, with some exceptions like flying and taking a long car ride.

Sometimes your doctor will also recommend injections. These injections treat side veins which cannot be treated with laser. They treat your vein in a different way to laser but still do a great job in sealing the veins

Two of the most popular treatments are called

Foam Sclerotherapy and
Endovenous Laser ablation.

First Step:

Scan your veins (First consultation)

Make sure that when you go for the appointment you take a list of all medications you are currently taking and any conditions you are being treated for by your regular doctor. Your first appointment is also the time to ask about the various treatments that are offered at the clinic. There are many available and the specialist should be able to give you his opinion on the treatment he thinks is the best for you based on his examination of your condition.



Assess Your Legs Today

No referral needed

Call **1300 535 017** or
go to **www.theveininstitute.com.au**