

What to do about varicose veins

Do you have bulging veins on your legs? The veins may be blue, purple or red in color. If so, you may have varicose veins.



WHAT ARE VARICOSE VEINS?

Your heart is always pumping blood out to your organs. Then, the blood goes back to the heart through the veins. Veins have special valves that push the blood back toward the heart.

Sometimes these valves stop working correctly. This may happen if valves get weaker over time. Then the blood pools in the vein, unable to move.

Blood that is pooling in a vein may cause the bulge or bump of a varicose vein.



NOT JUST COSMETIC

Some people don't like the look of varicose veins. But they can also cause other problems. Varicose veins may itch or cause pain, swelling or heaviness in the legs.

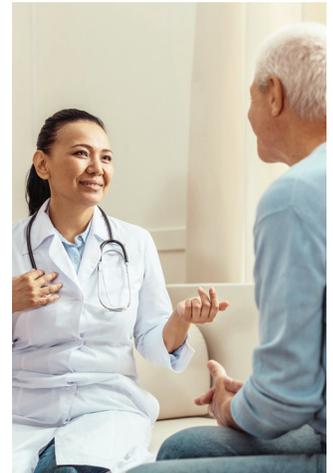
They can also continue to weaken the vein over time. This can cause skin changes like open sores or hard, thick areas of skin.



MEDICAL OPTIONS

Ask your doctor about medical procedures that can help. Options may include:

- Lasers that heat the vein and close it off
- Injections that seal the vein closed
- Surgery to remove the vein if non-invasive options don't work

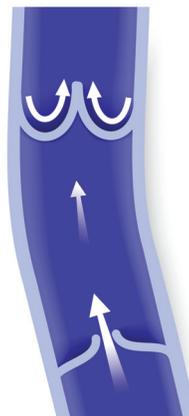


HELPING AT HOME

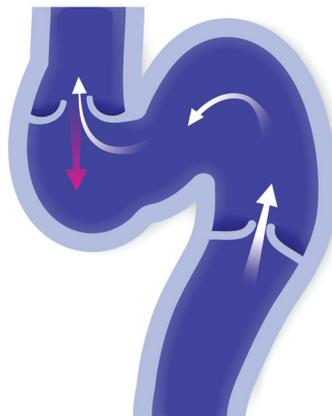
If varicose veins bother you, there are some things you can do.

- First, work toward a healthy weight. Being overweight puts more pressure on the veins.
- Be active. Exercise gets your blood pumping. This helps move blood out of the veins.
- Ask your doctor about compression stockings. These can help relieve pain and heaviness for some people. These are available at drug stores and online without a prescription if your doctor gives you the okay to wear them.
- Put your legs up. When possible, keep your legs up above your heart.
- Don't wear clothes that are very tight around the waist or upper thighs.

Normal vein



Varicose vein



Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health