

Varicose Veins

Contributed by Administrator
Thursday, 17 January 2008

This is an extremely common condition which affects 4 times as many women as men, and affects almost half of the population of the over 50's. The reason that women are more affected than men, is possibly the result of child bearing.

A varicose vein is one which has become distended, swollen, lengthened and twisted. The most commonly affected veins, are the ones in the legs, but haemorrhoids (piles) are also a form of varicose veins.

The veins have no pump pressures behind them to move blood and are dependent on small valves which permit only one way movement of blood and prevent backwards flow by the action of the "muscle pump" which is created by the contraction and relaxation of surrounding muscles.(e.g. when walking the calf muscles serve to push the blood back up the legs). The tissue of veins is delicate and they can easily prolapse which will lead to a pooling of blood in the vein, thus creating a swelling of the vein leading to a varicosity.

Varicose veins are unpleasant to look at, they may be painful, but they are rarely dangerous. They may however predispose to a thrombus (blood clot) but this is relatively rare. Apart from the swollen vein itself, symptoms are usually aching and tiredness of the leg with a heavy feeling and occasional pain. If the circulation to that area of the leg where the vein is sufficiently reduced, a brownish discolouration may appear and could progress to form a venous ulcer. Again, because of the poor circulation these ulcers can be particularly difficult to treat and they may become infected.

Factors that may predispose to or aggravate varicose veins include:

Overweight - pregnancy or obesity which puts pressure on the large veins returning blood from the lower limbs and restricts blood flow.

Constrictive Clothing - Skin tight jeans and tight waists on trousers and skirts etc.

Lack Of exercise - This can cause poor muscle tone in the legs and poor circulation.

Standing for Long Periods - This will restrict blood return from the legs by force of gravity. It is especially damaging to stand on concrete or tiled floors.

Inherited Weakness - Varicose veins often run in families and this type of weakness in the blood vessel wall may make you more liable to develop varicose veins. Weakness may also be acquired, (e.g. after an accident, Phlebitis or Surgery).

Constipation - Straining with bowel movements may increase pressure on the abdomen and restrict blood flow through the larger vessels that drain the legs. This is often the main cause of haemorrhoids.

Sitting crossed legged - Sitting in this position may restrict the blood return from the legs.

Holistic Treatment Of Varicose veins.

Any tendency to constipation should be dealt with. A high fibre diet containing bulking agents if necessary like psyllium seeds maybe used. Plenty of spring or filtered water should be drunk, at least 8 glasses a day if possible. A gentle laxative could be used if necessary.

If standing for a long time it is best to wear support stockings and developing the habit of contracting and relaxing there calf muscles is a good idea, stand on your toes and then back on your heels repeatedly.

Keep the legs raised whenever possible on a pouffe or foot stool.

Exercise is very important. Exercise that works the legs is ideal and will be helpful. Walking, Cycling, Dancing, Running, Aerobics, Netball etc will all be useful. The inverted Yoga postures can be very helpful, but if you cannot stand on your head, lay on the floor with your legs up the wall. Try to use this position before putting on support stockings.

Hydrotherapy can be useful to improve circulation and tone up veins. Put 2 large buckets in the bath tub and fill one with hot water and one with cold. Sit on the edge of the bath and plunge feet and legs into the hot water bucket for 20 seconds and then into the cold water bucket for about 45 seconds.

Repeat this several times for 5 - 10 minutes. Always finish with cold water so that you leave the veins toned and tightened.

Supplements To Strengthen the Veins.

- Vitamin C plus bioflavonoids to bowel tolerance.
- Rutin and Quercitin 50mg daily
- Vitamin E 400iu. daily
- Vitamin A 10,000 iu. daily

Herbal Treatments.

There are many herbs useful for treating varicose veins :

- Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastranum*)
- Lime Flowers (*Tilia europea*)

- Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*).
- Externally Marigold(*Calendula*)
- Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastranum*) maybe massaged into the tissues..