

22 Things About Varicose Veins and Spider Veins That You May Not Be Aware Of

1. **They're common** –About 50 to 55 percent of women and 40 to 45 percent of men in the United States suffer from some type of vein problem. Varicose veins affect half of people 50 years and older.^{iv}
2. **In the case of varicose veins, they're not always *just* a cosmetic problem** – they can impact how you enjoy life and can potentially lead to serious health problems.^v
3. **Both varicose veins and spider veins are hereditary** – if you have family members with either, it's not uncommon if you develop them as well.ⁱⁱ
4. **They can be related to body weight** – if you are overweight, you're more likely to develop them.^{vi}
5. **They're gender-related** – women are more likely to develop them than men.^v
6. **They're age-related** – as you age, varicose and spider veins are more likely to develop.^v
7. **Varicose veins can develop during pregnancy** – but they tend to go away within 3 months after the pregnancy.^{vii}
8. **Varicose veins are thought to be hormone-related** – medications containing female hormones, such as birth control or hormone replacement therapy, increase your risk of developing varicose veins.^v
9. **They can be job-related** – if you have a job that involves sitting or standing all day, this may worsen your varicose veins. Crossing your legs can also make them worse, as this position impedes the flow of blood.^v
10. **Varicose veins can cause discomfort** – heaviness, tightness, pain with walking and cramps in the legs can be caused by varicose veins.^{viii}
11. **A doctor *may* be able to easily diagnose your condition** – sometimes a diagnosis can be made based on what you're feeling and the physical appearance of your legs.
12. **Duplex ultrasound is the best way to look for varicose veins**– this ultrasound imaging test uses sound waves to visualize the veins and measure blood flow.^v
13. **Varicose veins are typically found in the legs** – but spider veins are common on both the legs and face.
14. **Over time, varicose veins can worsen and cause changes in the skin** – changes might include sores that do not heal, increased leg swelling and hardening of the skin.^v
15. **Itchy ankles may not just be dry skin** – varicose veins can cause itching around the ankles.
16. **If a varicose vein is injured, it may bleed more than you might expect** – excess bleeding can be the result of the increased amount of blood that has pooled within the vein.
17. **2-3% of people with varicose veins will develop blood clots** – while rare, 25% of the time a clot forms, it can move into the deeper veins, becoming a deep vein thrombosis, a serious condition that needs immediate medical attention.^{ix} Improving the blood flow in your legs now may help you avoid getting blood clots.

18. **If you develop pain, redness or swelling around a varicose vein, or if you have a sore that is not healing** – you should make an appointment to see your doctor.
19. **Lifestyle changes may help** – committing to changes in your daily life such as losing weight and elevating your legs, as well as avoiding sitting or standing for long periods of time, may improve your symptoms.✓
20. **Compression stockings might help** – these special knee- or thigh-high stockings are made of elastic and compress the leg. They are often the first treatment for varicose veins.✓
21. **If lifestyle changes and compression stockings don't help your symptoms, there are other options** – some varicose vein treatments that can relieve symptoms and improve the look of your legs may include minimally invasive procedures, such as endovenous ablation, sclerotherapy or microphlebectomy. Or, there are more invasive options like vein ligation and stripping surgery, which involve tying off the veins and removing them.
22. **Your insurance may cover varicose veins treatment**