



Varicose Veins

Patient Instruction Sheet

The Do's and Don'ts

Varicose veins are dilated, twisting, bulging, discolored veins that are very close to the surface of the skin. Varicose means “dilated and twisted, and that is exactly what varicose veins in the leg look like. The dilated and bulging veins are filled with blood and the pressure in these veins is high because the valves in the veins that help the blood return to the heart are damaged. Varicose veins tend to be hereditary, most commonly occur in women, and worsen during pregnancy. Varicose veins may cause no symptoms or may cause a dull, heavy ache, itching, burning, fatigue, and cramping, particularly after standing for a long period of time. Some dilated veins may be tender to touch and occasionally, ankle swelling may develop as the day progresses. Some individuals are most concerned about the negative cosmetic appearance of varicose veins. Many women have small *spider veins* or web-like reddish-purple clusters of tiny veins on the legs, particularly the thighs. Rarely are spider veins a cause of pain.

DO

- ✓ Maintain a normal weight
- ✓ Avoid prolonged standing and sitting when possible
- ✓ Regular exercise that you can do and enjoy improves circulation. Walking, swimming, or even chair exercises are great. Just move!
- ✓ Wear your support stocking while exercising. This helps move the increased blood in the legs back to the heart
- ✓ Elevate your feet above your heart while sleeping. Elevate foot of bed using bricks or a 2x4 or by placing a blanket or comforter under the mattress
- ✓ Wear professionally made gradient support stockings that apply decreasing pressure on the leg from the ankle to knee
- ✓ Put support stockings on before you get out of bed in the morning if possible
- ✓ Wear rubber dishwashing gloves to help you put your supports on
- ✓ Watch carefully for folds in your support stockings. The top of a knee length stocking should be just below the bend of the back of your knee by about 2 finger widths
- ✓ Do clip your toenails, and file them to avoid snagging or running the stocking
- ✓ Have at least two pairs of support stockings available so you can change them daily. Stockings need to be washed after each wearing to maintain the shape and compression for as long as possible
- ✓ Avoid activities that are likely to cause injury to legs of feet like walking barefoot

- ✓ Wear support all day, and remove in the evening when done with your day's activities
- ✓ Make sure to wash your lower legs and feet regularly with mild soap and water
- ✓ Be very careful if you shave your legs to avoid the thin walled veins that can be easily cut
- ✓ Use moisturizing creams right after washing legs, it is very important that you keep your legs clean and moisturized
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's instructions for laundering and care of your support stockings
- ✓ Buy new stockings every 3 -6 months so they maintain their compression (support)
- ✓ If you have been up for a while and decide to put on a stocking, lie down with your feet elevated above heart level for at least 20 minutes to help reduce any swelling and make your supports easier to get on
- ✓ Wear support stockings during pregnancy

DON'T

- ✓ Wear ACE bandages. Ace wraps do not provide proper compression; and they are extremely difficult to wrap properly to provide the pressure you need
- ✓ Wear tight girdles, pants, boots, or any leg coverings that have tight tops that might have a tourniquet effect that keeps the blood from leaving the legs
- ✓ Cross your legs
- ✓ Don't get measured for graduated support stockings late in the day. Late day measurements may result in being fitted for a support stocking that is too big, and won't adequately control your swelling
- ✓ Wear jewelry when donning compression stocking
- ✓ Walk around without footwear to protect the stocking
- ✓ Put on socks or leggings on first then cover it with the compression stocking
- ✓ Wash the stocking in cold water or use Woolite for laundering
- ✓ Wear your stockings to bed at night
- ✓ Fold the top over, or pull it up on the knee