



Q & A's on Varicose Veins

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Is there a medical specialty to treat varicose veins?

A Phlebologist is a physician who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of varicose veins and vein disorders. Phlebology is a specialized branch of medicine that deals with diseases of the veins.

What are the risk factors for the development of varicose veins?

Approximately 20% of adults develop varicose veins, and women are four times more likely than men to develop the condition. Individuals with a family history of varicose veins are at greater risk. Other risk factors include prolonged standing, obesity, a history of blood clots in the legs, and pregnancy.

What are the consequences if I don't seek medical attention for my varicose veins?

The key is to treat vein problems before the damage escalates to a more serious condition. Varicose veins are not only unattractive, but can be associated with pain, burning, itching, and swelling. Symptoms typically worsen with time, and can lead to the development of dangerous blood clots and profound skin changes such as eczematous dermatitis, irreversible pigmentation, or ulcerations in the lower legs.

What's new in the treatment of varicose veins?

In recent years, new techniques and products have emerged to allow physicians to treat varicose veins more successfully and with little discomfort or disruption of daily routines. For veins in which valvular dysfunction is diagnosed, a revolutionary technique called endovenous laser ablation is performed which requires no incisions. A thin laser fiber is placed into the diseased vein through a needle, allowing for the delivery of laser energy to seal the vein shut from inside to eliminate blood flow. Another advancement in the treatment of varicose veins has been the recent approval of Polidocanol by the FDA for use in the United States. Polidocanol is used for sclerotherapy treatment of spider veins and has been used with great success for many years around the world. The recent introduction of the product to the U.S. market signals an important step forward for office-based treatment of spider veins. Recent studies of Polidocanol have demonstrated superior efficacy over other treatment options and better patient satisfaction.

Fortunately, effective treatments are available for veins of all sizes. Contemporary treatments are all minimally invasive and can normally be performed on an outpatient basis in the doctor's office.

Larry A. Stern, M.D. is board-certified in both Phlebology and Surgery. He is the Medical Director of the Vein Specialty Center located in Wooster. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 330.264.LEGS (5347).



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