

# VARICOSE VEINS AND VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

It is estimated that 20-25% of Americans have varicose veins and about 6% have more advanced venous disease.

## What is venous insufficiency?

Venous insufficiency refers to conditions related to or caused by veins that become dysfunctional. Veins should function as low pressure, one-way conduits that return blood to the heart. With venous insufficiency, vein walls become weak, damaged and stretched. The vein's valves stop working normally, allowing blood to flow backward, and increasing venous pressure.

Chronic venous insufficiency (CVI) leads to the development of venous stasis and varicose veins. Signs of venous stasis include swelling in the lower leg and ankle, dull pain, restless legs and red or brown skin discoloration. More advanced stages of CVI include difficult-to-heal ulcers, recurrent infection and skin breakdown.

## What causes varicose veins?

Varicose veins are dilated veins that bulge through the skin. They are usually blue in color and are sometimes painful. Many factors increase a person's chances of developing varicose veins. They include:

- Age
- Genetics
- Hormonal changes, including pregnancy
- Leg injury
- Lifestyle – working on your feet for long hours
- Standing for long periods of time
- Obesity
- Prolonged sitting

## How can varicose veins be prevented?

Not all varicose can be prevented; however, there are ways you can reduce your chances of getting new varicose veins and can help ease discomfort from the ones you already have. Regular exercise, weight control, avoiding standing or sitting for long periods of time and eating a low-sodium diet rich in high-fiber foods can help control varicose veins. Compression stockings can reduce swelling and prevent pain from long periods of standing.

## How can I treat varicose veins or CVI?

Today, there are several minimally-invasive treatment options that are covered by most insurance plans. While compression stockings are often first prescribed to manage symptoms, there are a variety of other treatments that can actually treat the diseased veins, eliminate varicose veins and halt the progression of CVI.

- **Saphenous Vein Ablation is a minimally invasive treatment that eliminates the veins that allow high venous pressure to develop. Often times this procedure will alleviate pain and swelling.**
- **Micro-Phlebectomy is a procedure that physicians use to remove dilated or painful varicose veins.**
- **Sclerotherapy is a technique to remove small unsightly veins (less than 1.0 mm in size and blue or red in color).**

## Can I get screened for CVI?

Evaluation of venous insufficiency with ultrasound is an easy and accurate way to assess the need for treatment. Please call our office today to schedule a consult with one of our physicians and discuss your treatment options

Washington Health System – Cardiovascular Care  
125 N. Franklin Drive, Suite 1, Washington, PA 15301  
**(724) 225-6500**