

Vein View

Insights and Information about Healthy Lifestyles and Treatment Options.

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Produced by  **Vein Specialists**
of Arizona

In this Issue



Did You Know?
Vein Treatment
Advances



Fit or Fashion
Do you have to
choose just one?



About our Founder,
Dr. Jeffrey B. Alpern

Can Too Much Sun Trigger Vein Issues?



Can Too Much Sun Trigger Vein-Related Issues?

Though sunny weather can improve your mood, too much of it can negatively affect your veins. While it's common knowledge that sun exposure can lead to sunburn and increased risk of skin cancer, it can also worsen conditions such as spider veins, and even cause new venous issues altogether.

This doesn't mean that you should avoid spending time in the great outdoors, but it's important to know the risks of sun exposure and how to properly protect yourself.

How Sun Affects Veins

In general, varicose and spider veins are products of poor circulation between the heart and the legs coupled with weakened vein walls, which creates visible, uncomfortable veins. Warmer temperatures can aggravate these conditions, causing veins to dilate, enlarge, and distend even further. This can also worsen the swelling and associated discomfort.

If you don't already have varicose veins, you probably won't develop them from spending too much time in the sun. However, prolonged exposure to sunlight can sometimes cause spider veins to appear. Spider veins are a cousin of varicose veins, which typically manifest themselves as red or blue spindly lines running along the skin. Overexposure to the sun can break down the collagen in your skin and weaken the blood vessels. As a result, the skin can become less elastic. As it does so, the tissues become weaker, making it easier for spider veins to emerge. Some people tan with the intention of hiding them, however it can make them more conspicuous and lead to other issues in the long term.

Dress Right and Block Sun

You don't need to avoid the sun altogether, but try to limit your time outside, particularly between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM, when the sun's rays are most powerful.

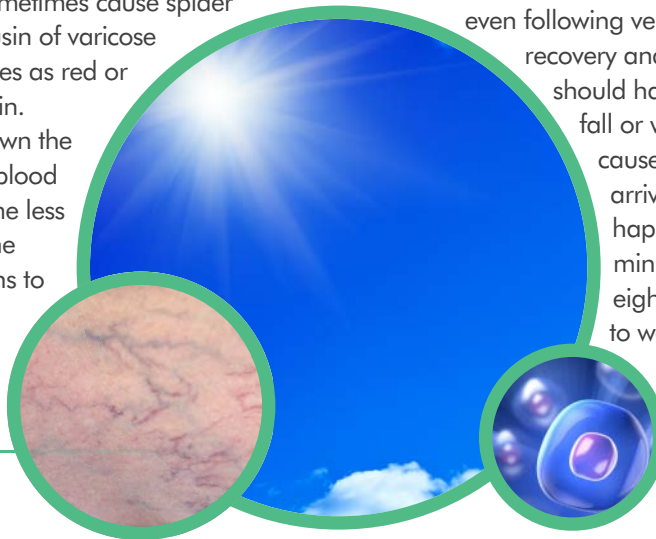
Avoid clothing that exposes excessive amounts of skin, or invest in a quality wide-brimmed hat.



Vein conditions or not, sunscreen should be a crucial step in your routine. Apply some sunscreen 15 minutes before you head outside, and remember to reapply approximately every two hours. Don't just focus on problem areas for vein conditions like the feet and legs; apply sunscreen anywhere you have exposed skin, including ears and top of the head.

Even Vein Procedures Won't Protect You

Even if you recently underwent a vein procedure, you should still take this advice. Since the sun's rays can be detrimental even following vein procedures. To hasten your recovery and ensure complete healing, you should have the procedure done in the fall or winter, so that you'll have less cause for concern once the summer arrives. Regardless of when it happens, keep sun exposure to a minimum for the following three to eight weeks, and always remember to wear sunscreen.



Did You Know?

Treatments for varicose veins have come a long way since the days of vein stripping, which required an overnight hospital stay, general anesthesia and a long, often painful recovery period.

Over the years new technology has given us laser therapy, which works via laser fiber inserted into the vein that produces enough heat to cauterize the vein. It has given us radiofrequency, which is similar to laser therapy with less heat. And it has given us sclerotherapy, which uses a medication injected into affected veins to seal them off.

And now the FDA has approved a brand new procedure, VenaSeal™ by Medtronic.

Contact us at 623-428-0068 for details.

If a Vein Bleeds, What Should You Do?

A recent report from England of an elderly woman who died from a bleeding varicose vein in her leg has prompted this article. It is designed to both help out in the event of a hemorrhage and address common underlying reasons that bleeding from varicose veins or spider veins may occur. While there are always occasional reports of deaths from ruptured veins this is still a very rare phenomenon.

If a Vein Bleeds, What Should You Do ?

- First thing to do is to remain calm. Spontaneous outflows are often from very small openings and are more likely to ooze then spurt blood. The pulsate squirting of blood is seen with arteries and not with veins.
- Apply direct pressure over the open wound. It's extremely unlikely that more than one break of the skin has occurred so start by applying either a finger or a cloth over the opening and applying direct and firm pressure.
- Elevate the leg. Lifting the leg above the heart is ideal but even lifting it above the waistline will alleviate much of the pressure in the veins and dramatically slow or even stop the seeping of blood. We often tell patients to hold pressure for longer than they might think is necessary to fully ensure a scab and clot have formed.
- DO NOT use a tourniquet!! Tourniquets are used to 'trap or hold' blood in the veins. (For example, when drawing blood for testing.) If applied incorrectly, the compression wrap can actually do more harm than good.
- Seek medical attention. Once the bleeding has stopped there is a significant chance of recurrence. By seeing a doctor for treatment of the veins you can dramatically reduce the chances of it happening again.
- As one would expect, the incidence of bleeding from veins far exceeds the incidences in fatalities resulting from ruptured veins. In two surgical journal articles, the reported rate at which patients were seen at local ER's in Chicago was only 14 patients in 4 years, while in a large European hospital it was 124 bleeds over 5 years.



Factors Predisposing To Bleeds From Leg Veins

- Minor trauma- While sometimes a rupture seemingly occurs without any underlying physical contact obviously a bang or bump on the legs can break the skin. A very common place to experience a hemorrhage is in the shower. While it's not really a trauma, the rubbing or touching of enlarged superficial veins while washing may be all that it takes to pierce the tissue.
- Increasing age- As a person ages their varicose and spider veins tend to worsen and become more likely to burst. They may also be disoriented and unaware that they are bleeding.
- Leg ulcers- These are due to the presence of venous insufficiency (blood not returning up towards the heart as it should due to vein problems). In some cases the ulceration may erode into the vein itself and thus bleed.
- Other medical conditions- Beyond venous insufficiency conditions.
- Heart failure- This increases the pressure on the veins and also can make bleeds more difficult to stop.
- Liver failure (cirrhosis)- This has two negative consequences. It increases the pressure in the leg veins as well as potentially effecting the livers ability to produce blood clotting factors.
- Blood coagulopathy (clotting problems)- Some problems are genetic or acquired while others are the result of medications. The genetic and acquired conditions include Von Willebrands Disease and hemophilia. Medically induced situations that 'thin the blood' include the taking of aspirin, NSAIDS, Coumadin and Eliquis. Some of these actually do 'thin the blood' but more likely they make clotting and clot formation times longer. If they are being used it's assumed that they are medically necessary for other diseases.

What to Wear?



With Spring & Summer come a lot of events and activities! Weddings, Parties and even returning to an exercise routine may have you asking yourself, "What to wear?"

We don't offer "fashion advice". But we DO get questions about footwear in regard to leg and vein issues. Hands down. High heels do not cause vein issues. But if you're already suffering with varicose & spider veins, they may aggravate the condition.

Contact us for more information or to schedule an evaluation. We're happy to speak with you!



From Our Founder

Jeffrey B. Alpern, D.O.,
Cardiovascular Surgeon and Vein
Specialist.

In all my years of training, teaching and clinical experience in the field of cardiovascular medicine, I treated many patients for spider veins, varicose veins, chronic venous insufficiency, venous stasis leg ulcers and cellulitis.

Most of these patients suffered for many years and had a very poor quality of life. Some had been in and out of wound care centers for leg ulcer treatment. Others with varicose veins had experienced painful, debilitating vein stripping procedures with a long and difficult recovery period. I also saw patients who had recurrent vein problems after receiving aesthetic spider vein and varicose procedures from physicians who were not vein specialists or capable of detecting or treating an underlying venous pathology. All too often, I saw patients who had been incorrectly diagnosed and treated for Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) when their problem was caused by an underlying venous problem. I knew the answer for these patients was all about accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment through the least invasive, quick and relatively painless office procedures.

My interest in advanced vascular surgery for vein treatment led me to investigate and try methods that were much less invasive compared to traditional practices. Specifically, these procedures could be performed without general anesthesia through minimally invasive out-patient laser and radio frequency treatments and other techniques. The results clearly exceeded my expectations. More than 96% of the patients experienced total relief without any adverse effects. All were able to resume their activities in just a few days to a week. Venous disease treatment procedures were covered by private insurance and Medicare.

Great results combined with a high level of patient satisfaction inspired me to shift my focus away from cardiovascular surgery and concentrate on providing safe, effective and relatively simple out-patient venous disease and cosmetic vein treatment. Vein Specialists of Arizona (VSA) was founded to meet the needs of large numbers of people in Arizona who suffer from poorly treated or mismanaged venous disease. Another goal of VSA is to provide aesthetic spider vein and varicose vein treatments along with an evaluation that rules out serious pathology in need of correction.

Vein Specialists of Arizona is a state-of-the-art vein center that defines a new standard in care for the diagnosis and treatment of varicose veins, legs ulcers and chronic venous insufficiency. From vein therapies that cure existing underlying pathology to procedures that erase spider veins before the patient's eyes, we think you will find VSA to be your best choice for compassionate, safe, effective, affordable and convenient vein treatment.

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