

A Guide to Healthier Legs

Are You at Risk?

Leg problems are widespread throughout the world, but what many people don't know is that approximately 80% of leg disorders originate within veins. If you have tired, aching, swollen legs, or if you see beginning of varicose veins go to your family physician for check up.

Causes and Risk Factors of Venous Problems

- Long distance travel
- Heredity
- Age over 40
- Prolonged sitting or standing
- Pregnancy
- Obesity
- Sedentary lifestyle surgery or trauma
- Infectious disease
- Use of hormone medication

Common Symptoms

In most cases, venous problems do not occur 'out of the blue'. There are typical warning signs, such as:

- Heavy, tired, or aching legs
- A feeling of tension, cramps, or fatigue
- Swollen ankles
- Spider veins
- Initial signs of varicose veins

The Circulatory System

The heart is the main pump of the circulatory system. It is the muscle that pumps oxygen-rich blood through the arteries and into tiny capillaries where body cells exchange the oxygen for carbon dioxide. The blood then enters the veins, which carries it back to the heart.

Circulating blood through the veins can be a challenge. By the time blood enters the veins, the force pushing this blood has weakened. Gravity forces veins to work even harder to return blood to the heart.

Venous Return

The body has a number of ways to help blood return to the heart. Just as the arterial system uses power of the heart to drive fresh blood into the tissues, the calf muscle acts as a 'second heart' by contracting and relaxing as a person walks.

One-way valves in the superficial and deep veins help blood to flow back to the heart. The deep system handles the vast majority of the venous blood volume and is the high pressure system of the venous circulation in the legs. Most of the remaining blood volume is handled by the superficial system, which is the low pressure system. When calf muscle relax, the valves close to prevent blood from flowing backwards into the lower part of the vein. These valves are fragile and can be easily damaged.

Other 'pumps' help push blood toward the heart, such as the ankle, the foot, and the diaphragm.

What is Venous Insufficiency?

Venous insufficiency is a condition in which the valves of the veins fail to function. This interferes with venous return to the heart and causes blood to pool in the vein. Factors leading to venous insufficiency include venous stasis, changes or damage to the vein walls or valves.

Venous insufficiency can lead to spider veins, varicose veins, phlebitis, blood clots, and changes in the skin, including leg ulcers.

Descriptions of Venous Conditions

Spider veins are small superficial blood vessels that appear red or blue in the skin. *Varicose veins* are visibly enlarged veins that are often bluish in color and may appear twisted. They are caused by pooling of blood in a damaged vein and can sometimes be painful. In the early stages of varicose veins, the legs may feel tired, heavy, achy, or tense.

Phlebitis is the inflammation of vein wall, and is the most common problem associated with varicose veins. Symptoms can include swelling, redness, warmth, or pain in the affected area.

A *Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)* is a blood clot in one of the deep veins. About 25 % of DVTs move away from the deep veins and travel through bloodstream into the lungs. This is known as *pulmonary embolism*, and can have life-threatening consequences.

Symptoms of a DVT include:

- Pain and tenderness in one leg
- Swelling in one leg
- Increased warmth and redness in one leg
- Shortness of breath and fainting
- Pain in the chest
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The symptoms of a DVT can go unrecognized.

Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVI) is a collective term used to describe a long-standing condition involving impaired venous return in varying degrees of severity. Symptoms include:

- Edema (swelling)
- Feeling of heaviness in the legs
- Pain or cramps in the calves
- Skin discolorations
- Dermatitis (skin problems)
- Dry or weeping eczema
- Venous leg ulcer

A *Venous Leg Ulcer* is an open wound usually forms near ankle due to chronic poor circulation. The ulcer has a weeping, raw appearance and the skin surrounding the ulcer is dry, itchy, and reddish-brownish in color. Venous leg ulcers are usually slow to heal.

Did you know: Compression therapy is the treatment of choice for CVI

Why Compression Works

What does graduated compression therapy do to help with the management of venous problems? The external graduated compression of SIVARIS socks and stockings acts as a layer of muscle by gently squeezing the stretched vein walls together, allowing the valves to close. The cavity of the vein is reduced, thereby restoring blood flow to a normal state and aiding overall circulation. To be most effective, the socks should be put on at start at your day and removed before you go to bed.

Remember, the heart pumps blood against gravity up the veins of the legs. As person walks, the contraction and relaxation of the calf muscles around the veins aid in moving blood toward the heart.

Some people have an inherited weakness of the vein walls or valves which creates additional challenges to venous return. Wearing SIVARIS compression socks and stockings is vital for the prevention and treatment of varicose veins and other circulatory problems.

Graduated compression – compression is greatest at the ankle, gradually decreasing up the leg.

Your Doctor Can Help

Effective methods for the treatment of venous disorders are readily available. Your physician can provide a diagnosis to correctly assess your condition and to take appropriate therapeutic measures.

When Does a Doctor Prescribe SIGVARIS

Many doctors prescribe SIGVARIS medical socks or stockings for any active vein disorder of the leg, or as a preventative measure in cases when risk factors are present. They are also prescribed after surgery for patients who are not confined to bed.

Filling your prescription is easy. Just go to **LILY AVALON SHOES** certified SIGVARIS dealer, where a trained fitter takes your measurements and can recommend the correct socks or stockings for you based on your physician's advice.

LILY AVALON SHOES keeps in stock variety of SIGVARIS socks and stockings for moderate and more severe symptoms: 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60 mmHg