

Dr De Felice of Vein & Laser, advice on vein care.

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Varicose veins have slightly weakened collagen in their walls usually due to inherited factors.

These veins stretch and collect and contain more blood (than your normal veins) making them bulgy and achy. Up to 30 % of adults develop varicose veins. If you have a predisposition there are lifestyle changes you can make to reduce the chances of developing varicose veins, or at least delay their onset or severity.

Things you cannot control

- A family history of varicose veins is a common underlying cause, suggesting genetics play a role in development of varicose veins.
- Women are more prone to develop varicose veins because of fluctuation of hormones during puberty, pregnancy and menopause.
- Varicose veins are more likely to develop as we get older.

Things you can control

- Exercise regularly: Leg muscle contraction acts to push the blood up the veins of the leg and back to the heart. Low impact exercises like walking, cycling swimming are best.
- Eat a high fibre diet: Excess weight can worsen varicose veins and cause venous problems. A high fibre diet and drinking plenty of water also keeps the bowels soft in order to avoid straining with constipation which places additional pressure on your veins.
- Elevate your legs when resting: Elevation reduces pressure in the veins and helps the return of blood to the heart. This will relieve aching, leg tiredness and swelling.
- Elastic compression stockings /socks: These “graduated” stockings provide more compression near the ankles and less compression further up the leg, which encourages the flow of blood back to the heart. Ask your doctor or vein clinic to recommend a supplier.
- Moisturising creams: These help keep the skin of the leg moist and in good condition. This will help to reduce skin dryness and venous eczema. Use a bland cream, like aqueous cream.
- Seek treatment early. If varicose veins develop, early intervention means the treatments are less extensive /invasive and more effective. Even if you varicose veins have been treated a review every few years will ensure any new varicosities are diagnosed and treated early.

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