

The Truth About Varicose Veins

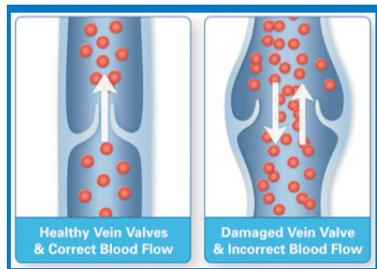
For years, physicians and patients have placed varicose veins and vein disease on the “medical back-burner.” For example...*Joanne came in to see me after the delivery of her third child two years ago. She had symptoms in her legs of aching pain heaviness and swelling – symptoms that had worsened since the delivery of her third child. For the last 11 years she had been standing everyday while teaching school. Her father had his veins “stripped” in 1975, so she was reluctant to seek treatment, as his experience was not positive. I used modern techniques of endovenous thermal ablation and microphlebectomy to treat her vein disease. She was thrilled with the results and commented, “If I had only known that these treatments were available, I would have come in much sooner” - Unfortunately, her story all too common.*

Our veins function to return blood from the legs to the heart. For 25 million Americans, damaged vein valves allow gravity to pull blood down abnormally towards the feet – this medical condition is called venous reflux disease. As the leg veins become abnormally stretched, symptoms of aching, pain, heaviness, tiredness, fatigue, cramps, throbbing and swelling of the legs develop. Despite this, many patients consider their vein problems to be “cosmetic,” and do not seek treatment.

In the past, the main treatment was “vein stripping.” Because of associated pain, bleeding, bruising and numbness, only patients with advanced disease were offered treatment. The diagnosis was often inaccurate because duplex ultrasound was not available.

Over the last two decades there has been significant technological changes in the field of Phlebology (the diagnosis and treatment of vein diseases). Because of this, our whole approach to vein disease has changed for the better.

Patients with symptoms of venous reflux disease now benefit



from duplex ultrasound to make an accurate diagnosis and plan treatment.

Vein stripping procedures have largely been replaced by endovenous thermal ablations techniques that are almost always performed in the office, under local anesthesia, rather than in the hospital using general anesthesia. The cost and risk of complications has dramatically decreased.

Venous reflux disease is a medical condition, therefore it's diagnosis and treatment is usually covered by insurance including Medicare, private insurance and Medi-Cal.

Other office-based procedures for leg veins include, microphlebectomy, ultrasound-guided sclerotherapy, visual micro-sclerotherapy, and Veinwave™ thermo-coagulation for facial spider veins. Treatment decisions are uniquely individualized to each patient's particular symptoms and duplex ultrasound results.

Stay tuned ... Topics to be discussed in future weekly articles include:

- Vein Anatomy and Venous Reflux Disease
- Causes of Vein Diseases – Risk Factors
- Chronic Venous Insufficiency
- Ultrasound Diagnosis of Vein Disease
- Endovenous Thermal Ablation – Close Those Abnormal Veins!
- Microphlebectomy – It's not the same as Vein Stripping!

Stephen J. Hopkins, MD, FACS

For a personal consultation with Dr. Hopkins call 532-5528 to make an appointment. Dr. Hopkins is a General Surgeon, Certified by the American Board of Surgery, and a Phlebologist, Certified by the American Board of Phlebology.

The Mother Lode Vein Institute has offices in Jackson (256-9499) and Sonora (532-5528)



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