

VEIN HEALTH

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Q&A on Vein Symptoms

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Why do my legs cramp? Could it be my veins?

Leg cramps are very common, especially in individuals over the age of 50. There are many causes for leg cramps. One commonly overlooked cause of leg cramps is chronic venous disease. When veins dilate and stretch, there is increased pressure in the vein. Small amounts of venous blood, which is poor in oxygen and high in waste products, leaks into the tissues. This causes the muscle to cramp.

If dilated veins cause muscle cramps, will treating my veins stop my cramps?

Leg cramps caused by chronic venous disease will improve with treatment of the veins. The veins can be treated with heat ablation, chemical ablation and compression stockings. Ablating the vein provides long-term improvement in leg cramps, while compression stockings can provide improvement in the cramps when they are worn.

What are other symptoms of vein problems?

Veins that don't work properly result in many symptoms in the legs. These symptoms include leg aching, heaviness, fatigue, cramping, restlessness, itching, and throbbing and swelling. These symptoms tend to be worse at the end of the day or after sitting or standing for a long time.

Do I have to see varicose veins to have vein problems?

Not always. Many, but not all, people with vein problems that cause symptoms have varicose veins or spider veins. Some people have symptoms of bad veins and no outward visible sign of vein problems. The only way to tell is to do a detailed vein ultrasound, called a vein mapping, on the legs at a dedicated vein clinic. An

ultrasound is only as reliable as the technician performing it. It is important to have vein mapping done by an ultrasound technician with experience in mapping veins.

What is Chronic venous disease or "bad veins"? How did I get it?

Veins channel blood from the tissue back to the heart. Veins carry blood that is low in oxygen and high in waste products. Blood is pushed through the veins in several ways; one of which is through muscle contraction. The calf muscle in the leg plays a big role in pushing blood back to the heart. In addition, veins have valves. Valves ensure blood moves in one direction, towards the heart. Due to a family history of "stretchy" veins, trauma (injury, surgery, broken bone, etc.) or a clot, the veins stretch and the valves fail. This causes blood to flow in the wrong direction. The oxygen poor blood can "back up" and leak into your tissues. This causes all the symptoms of chronic venous disease as mentioned above. Plus, failed valves cause the veins to stretch further and other valves to fail. In essence, bad veins lead to more bad veins.

What can I do for my veins?

There are many treatments for bad veins or Chronic Venous Insufficiency. Gone are the days of vein stripping. Almost everyone with bad veins can be treated in the clinic with an outpatient procedure. Treatments include heat ablation, chemical ablation and compression stockings. As bad veins cause many symptoms and treatments alleviate those symptoms, insurance companies do pay for the ablations. Other treatments that temporarily improve the symptoms of bad veins are: compression stockings, ice or cold wraps, elevating the legs, ibuprofen, Tylenol, walking, and pointing/flexing the foot. In addition, staying active, maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding standing or sitting for long periods of time, avoiding high heels and compression stockings can help the veins stay healthy longer.

For additional information on Chronic Venous Disease and its treatments, please visit: www.rockymountainveinclinic.com.

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