Vein Health

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Q&A

on Vein Symptoms

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My legs swell. Could it be my veins?

Yes. There are many causes for swollen legs. Bad veins, also known as chronic venous disease, is one of the most common causes for swollen legs. Normally, veins carry blood from the legs back to the heart. Valves make sure the blood flows in the right direction. If the veins stretch or the valves don't work right, not enough blood is sent back to the heart. This causes the legs to swell.

What are the symptoms of swelling?

Swelling leads to "puffy skin". The skin will usually look shiny and stretched. Swelling can be as simple as sock lines at the end of the day. Or it can be as bad as leaving a dent with the thumb, that stays in the skin, all the way up the leg. Leg swelling can cause no pain, be uncomfortable or cause pain when walking.

When should I see a health care provider about leg swelling?

There are many serious medical conditions that cause leg swelling. One swollen leg can be caused by bad veins, or a more serious condition called a deep vein clot (DVT). DVTs can be life threatening and require immediate attention. Swelling in both legs can be caused by bad veins, heart failure, liver disease, kidney disease, medicine, long flights or pregnancy. Most of the time, when legs swell on or after a plane flight, it is due to bad veins. However, leg swelling after a plane ride can be normal. Any new leg swelling, whether in one leg or both legs, needs to be evaluated by your health care provider.

What are other symptoms of bad veins?

Veins that don't work right cause numerous symptoms in the leg. Most of these symptoms are worse at the end of the day or after prolonged sitting or standing. In addition to leg swelling, bad vein symptoms include: leg aching, heaviness, fatigue, itching, burning, numbness, restlessness, cramping or sores that are slow to heal. Sometimes one or more of these symptoms come on so slowly that people attribute it to old age. At any age, legs should not ache, feel heavy, itch, burn, swell, cramp or be restless.

Tell me more about Chronic Venous Disease or "Bad Veins"

Arteries deliver oxygen rich blood from the heart to the rest of body. Veins return the oxygen poor blood back to the heart. Veins have valves to ensure blood flows only towards the heart. When veins stretch, valves fail. Blood is then allowed to flow in the wrong direction, away from the heart. Oxygen poor blood "leaking" into the muscles, skin, nerves and other tissues causes the above mentioned symptoms. This is chronic venous disease.

If bad veins are the cause of my swelling, what can I do?

There are many treatment options to reduce leg swelling. A temporary improvement in swelling can be achieved with compression stockings, raising the legs up, walking, pointing and flexing the foot, and avoiding sitting or standing for a long period of time. It is very important for people with bad veins to wear compression stockings on plane rides or prolonged car rides to prevent swelling. More permanent treatment of the swelling involves minimally invasive, outpatient procedures. These include closing the bad veins with heat or medicine.

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

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