

Varicose veins

Varicose veins are dilated, swollen veins. They occur frequently in women, people who are overweight or have constipation problems as well as those who work on their feet without moving. They worsen when the weather is warm or during pregnancy.

Varicose veins develop near the surface of the skin or in veins that are located deeper. The deeper varicose veins cause the most discomfort. Symptoms include legs that feel heavy, aching, swelling and darkening of the skin. In advanced cases, phlebitis (inflammation of the veins) and chronic ulcers may occur.

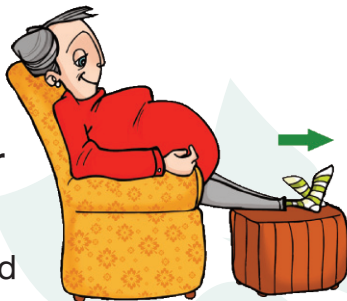
Dilated capillaries may also appear on legs but they are not varicose veins and are considered to be just a cosmetic concern.

Postures

Do not stand on your feet for long periods without walking around. If you cannot avoid doing so, tip-toe every once in a while. Or place your foot on a stool or low shelf.

Avoid long trips, especially by bus or car. Wear comfortable **shoes** and avoid high heels.

Periodically rest throughout the day for 15 minutes with your feet up, bending and stretching your ankles. Avoid crossing your legs when sitting. Raise the foot of your bed by 15 cms or place some **pillows under the mattress at the bottom of your bed.**



Exercise

Physical activities, such as walking, swimming or cycling will help improve your condition.

At home: walk on tip-toes and on your heels. Lie on your back and cycle with your legs in the air.



Other lifestyle advices

Bathe or spray your legs alternately with warm and cold water. In summertime, bathe in the sea and walk along the shore. After you bathe, **massage your legs with a hydrating cream, working your way from the bottom up.**

To reduce fluid retention, **use less salt in your meals.** If you have constipation problems, eat more fruit and vegetables. If overweight, try to lose a few kilos.

Avoid wearing tight clothes, such as girdles, garters or tight elastic socks. The elastic compression stockings your doctor will prescribe you are helpful.

Avoid sources of heat on your legs: too much sun or heat from heating or ovens, etc. **Take care not to bang your legs.** Contraceptives and patches for the treatment of menopause will also make varicose veins worse.