

A photograph of a person's legs and feet resting on a wooden dock over water at sunset. The person's feet are crossed at the ankles. The water is a mix of blue and orange, reflecting the setting sun. The dock is made of light-colored wooden planks.

## VARICOSE VEINS 101:

*What you need to know*  
About the Disease & Treatment

## Introduction

Varicose veins are a common vein disease. In fact, it's estimated that roughly 25-30 million Americans have varicose veins. Unfortunately, those with the disease generally don't take it seriously as it doesn't cause a significant amount of discomfort, at first. However, as a progressive disease, the symptoms associated with varicose veins will get worse as time goes on, especially when left untreated. In some cases, untreated varicose veins may cause additional health problems, which can be life-threatening.

In "Varicose Veins 101: What You Need to Know About the Disease and Treatment," you will learn about vein disease, what causes varicose veins to develop, the symptoms and the treatment options available at Gilvydis Vein Clinic.



## The Basics of Vein Disease

When it comes to understanding varicose veins, it's important to first learn about vein disease as a whole. As you probably already know, your veins play a key role in maintaining your body's circulatory system. In fact, your veins are responsible for transporting oxygen-rich blood from your heart throughout your body and back to your heart to start the process over again. However, as we age, a number of complications may arise. These complications limit the veins ability to properly return blood from various parts of the body back to the heart.

**TYPES OF VEIN DISEASE, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

Varicose Veins

Spider Veins

Pulmonary Embolism

Deep Vein Thrombosis

Chronic Venous Insufficiency

As previously mentioned, vein disease is a progressive condition. This means the symptoms will worsen with time. In some cases, vein disease can lead to the development of blood clots, which can be life-threatening.

## Understanding Varicose Veins

Varicose veins are swollen, lumpy and twisted veins that typically develop in the leg region; however, they can form in other parts of the body as well. They develop when the walls of the vein are pushed apart and are no longer able to form a proper seal. When this happens, the blood in the vein will begin to leak or pool, resulting in a varicose vein. Once a varicose vein forms, the vein is no longer able to properly move blood from the affected area back to the heart.

### WHAT CAUSES VARICOSE VEINS?

Unfortunately, for many, whether or not you will develop varicose veins or not comes down to your genetics. However, other factors also play a role, including:

#### BEING A WOMAN

According to various studies, women are four times more likely to develop varicose veins than men. Researchers believe this is due to the hormones estrogen and progesterone, which are believed to cause vein walls to relax. As a result, the valves have a higher likelihood of developing leaks.

#### PREGNANCY

The additional blood produced by a woman's body to help support the developing fetus often puts additional strain on the veins, which can result in the development of varicose veins. The increased number of hormones caused by pregnancy can also increase a woman's likelihood of developing varicose veins. Additionally, for some women, the growing womb may cause varicose veins to develop in the stomach and pelvic areas.



## Understanding Varicose Veins

### BEING OVERWEIGHT

When an individual is overweight their veins have to work harder to do their job. The extra effort puts more pressure on the valves, which increases their likelihood of forming leaks.

### REGULARLY STANDING FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME

Some studies show that those who have jobs that cause them to stand for extended periods of time have a higher risk of developing varicose veins. This is due to the fact that the veins have to work against gravity for long periods of time to move blood to your heart.

### INJURY

If a vein becomes damaged due to an injury (broken bone, muscle strain or powerful impact) it is at an increased risk.

### AGE

One in two people over the age of 50 have varicose veins. As we age our veins become weakened due to a loss of elasticity within the valves. This limits the veins ability to function properly, increasing the likelihood of blood pooling or leaking.

The factors mentioned above are the most common causes of varicose veins, however, in rare cases, they may be caused by a blood clot or abnormal blood vessels.

## Symptoms

For some, varicose veins are simply a cosmetic issue, while for others they greatly impact their quality of life. Below are the most common symptoms associated with the disease.

- FATIGUE AND/OR HEAVINESS IN THE LEGS
- THROBBING PAIN
- ACHING PAIN
- SORES OR OPEN WOUNDS
- BURNING
- LEG RESTLESSNESS
- ITCHING OR SKIN IRRITATION
- DARKENING OF THE SKIN
- NUMBNESS
- SWELLING IN THE LEGS, PARTICULARLY THE ANKLES
- DIFFICULTY BECOMING COMFORTABLE WHEN SITTING OR SLEEPING
- CRAMPING

If you're experiencing any of the symptoms mentioned above, it's important that you talk to your doctor at Gilvydis Vein Clinic. In some cases, these symptoms could be a sign of a more serious condition.



## Treating Varicose Veins

Although varicose veins are relatively common, a number of people don't know how important it is to seek medical treatment. The longer varicose veins go untreated the worse they will become. As a result, the symptoms will become more apparent and painful. Additionally, the risk of developing other health problems increases. Potential health problems include:

- DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS
- PULMONARY EMBOLISM
- OPEN WOUNDS, SORES AND/OR SKIN ULCERS
- PAINFUL RASHES AND SWELLING



## Treating Varicose Veins

### TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR

To understand the severity of your varicose veins, our team will first perform a physical exam or screening. At this time, we may also ask you questions about your symptoms and health. Next, we will perform ultrasound vein mapping. This gives us the ability to pinpoint precisely where the problem veins are located. From there, Dr. Gilvydis will develop a treatment plan. In some cases, he may recommend lifestyle changes, while in other cases, he may recommend medical treatment.

### LIFESTYLE CHANGES

If the varicose veins aren't causing you discomfort and are not at risk of causing further health problems, our team may recommend changing your lifestyle. Changes may include:

- Reducing the amount of time you spend standing or sitting.
- Elevating your legs for short periods of time throughout the day.
- Increase your amount of physical activity to help improve muscle tone and circulation
- Lose weight if you're overweight.
- Recommend that you start wearing compression or support stockings.

## Treating Varicose Veins

### MEDICAL TREATMENT

If medical treatment is needed, our team will use the latest cutting-edge technology to ensure the best possible outcomes. As a result, our patients report experiencing little to no discomfort, minimal downtime and no scarring. In fact, most patients return to their normal day-to-day activities the very next day.

### ENDOVENOUS LASER ABLATION (EVLA)

With this procedure, Dr. Gilvydis will treat your varicose veins using a laser catheter - no open surgery needed. First, he will insert a small catheter into the vein. Next, he will use a combination of heat and light to seal off the vein. As a result, your blood will be redirected to a healthy vein. The procedure takes roughly 45 minutes and is performed in the clinic using local anesthesia



# VARICOSE VEINS 101

## *What you need to know* About the Disease & Treatment

### Conclusion

If you're concerned that you have a vein disease, like varicose veins, schedule an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible. As a progressive disease, the condition will only get worse and the likelihood of developing a more serious health problem will increase with time.

With more than 20,000 successful vein procedures performed, our team has the experience needed to help you get a leg up on life. Contact our Geneva or Sycamore office for a free screening.

