

Varicose veins essay sample



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“ Varicose veins are gnarled, enlarged veins. Any vein become varicose, but the veins most commonly affected are those in your legs and feet. That’s because standing and walking upright increases the pressure in the veins of your lower body” (Mayo Clinic, 2011). “ Varicose veins are the result of damaged or improperly working valves in the veins, which cause blood to back up and make the vein swell” (Cardio Smart, 2012).

“ Varicose veins are enlarged veins that can be blue, red, or flesh colored. They often look like cords and appear twisted and bulging. They can be swollen and raised above the surface of the skin. They are often found on the thighs, back of the calves, or the inside of the leg. When a woman is pregnant, these veins can also form around the vagina and buttocks” (Women’s Health, 2010). “ They can be classified as primary or secondary. Primary varicose veins originate in veins that are close to the skins surface. Secondary varicose veins originate in deep veins, causing enlargement of veins close to the skin’s surface” (MedHelp, 2008).

Varicose veins are a very common condition. These veins can cause mild to moderate pain, skin ulcers, blood clots, or other issues (People Science Health, 2011). Many people think varicose veins are just a cosmetic concern (Mayo Clinic, 2011). “ Overtime, the vein walls become weakened and stretched, causing the veins to bulge out and twist. Eventually the veins may become unable to pump enough blood back to the heart, causing blood to pool in the legs” (Healthy Women, 2012).

“ The heart pumps blood filled with oxygen and nutrients to the whole body through arteries. Veins then carry the blood from the body back to the heart.

As your leg muscles squeeze, they push blood back to the heart from your lower body against the flow of gravity. Veins have valves that act as one-way flaps to prevent blood from flowing backwards as it moves up your legs. When the valves become weak, this causes the veins to become varicose” (Women’s Health, 2010).

“ Varicose veins are two to three times more common in women than men. Incidence increases with age and about 50% of people over the age of 50 have varicose veins” (MedHelp, 2008). “ About 25 million Americans are affected by varicose veins. They are most common in people aged 30 to 70” (Cardio Smart, 2012). “ About 50 to 55% of women and 40 to 45% of men in the United States suffer from varicose veins” (Women’s Health, 2010). Most people are more likely to get them as they get older (Kids Health, 2010). Being born with weak vein valves also increases your risk. Family history with vein problems also will increase your risk. About half of people with varicose veins had a family member who has had this (Women’s Health, 2010). “ Heredity is a very important risk factor. The chance of developing varicose veins doubles if a parent has the condition. If a family member has varicose veins, the risk for developing the condition is about 40% in female relatives and about 20% in male relatives” (MedHelp, 2008). Hormonal changes that occur during puberty, pregnancy, menopause, taking birth control pills and other medicines containing estrogen and progesterone can contribute to the formation of varicose veins (Women’s Health, 2010).

While pregnant, there is a huge amount of increased blood in your body. This can cause the veins to get bigger. Also the growing baby inside of you puts pressure on the veins. If you develop varicose veins during pregnancy, they

will improve three months after the baby is born. If you continue to have more babies, varicose veins will appear additionally with each pregnancy (Women's Health, 2010). If you are overweight or are obesity, having this extra weight on the body can put additional pressure on the veins. When a person tends to sit or stand for prolonged periods of time with legs bent or crossed, your veins have to work harder to pump the blood back to the heart. High blood pressure, lack of exercise, and previous leg injury will also cause varicose veins (Cardio Smart, 2012).

When a person has signs or symptoms they will have an achy or heavy feeling in the legs, burning, throbbing, muscle cramps or swelling in the legs. They can also have itching around the veins, recurrent phlebitis or cellulitis, dark brown discoloration near the ankles and skin ulcers near the ankles (Milford Institute, 2012). Sometimes when a person has the itchy skin near the veins, it is sometimes incorrectly diagnosed as dry skin (Cardio Smart, 2012). “ If left untreated, varicose veins can lead to very significant problems such as ulceration or blood clots. Blood clots can clog the vein stopping blood flow completely or break free and travel to the heart, lungs or brain. This results in life threatening heart attack, pulmonary embolism or stroke” (Harrisburg, 2008).

“ Doctors usually diagnose you with varicose veins with a simple physical exam. The doctor will look at the legs while you're standing or sitting with your legs dangling. He or she may ask about symptoms, including any pain. Other tests can be done to find out the extent of the problem and to rule out other disorders. An ultrasound used to see the veins' structure, check blood

flow and check for blood clots can be done. Some people get a venogram test done to get a more detailed look at blood flow” (Women’s Health, 2010).

“ The goals of treating varicose veins may include easing symptoms, avoiding complications, and improving cosmetic appearance. Although treatment can target existing varicose veins, it cannot keep new varicose veins from forming. Varicose veins that cause few signs and symptoms usually do not need to be treated. Instead simple health care measures are taken” (Cardio Smart, 2012). “ Self-care such as exercising, losing weight, not wearing tight clothes, elevating your legs, and avoiding long periods of standing or sitting can ease pain and prevent varicose veins from getting worse” (Mayo Clinic, 2011). If a person is unhappy with the way their legs look or if they have significant symptoms, they should seek medical attention (Milford Institute, 2012).

“ Wearing compression stockings is often the first approach to try before moving on to other treatments. Compression stockings are worn all day. They steadily squeeze your legs, helping veins and leg muscles move blood more efficiently. The amount of compression varies by type and brand. They come in a variety of strengths, styles and colors. A person can buy compression stockings at most pharmacies and medical supply stores. If a person does not respond to self-care, compression stockings, or if the condition is more severe, your doctor may recommend other surgery treatments” (Mayo Clinic, 2011). “ Sclerotherapy is the most common treatment for varicose veins. The doctor uses a needle to inject a liquid chemical into the vein. The chemical causes the vein walls to swell, stick together, and seal shut. This stops the flow of blood, and the vein turns into

scar tissue. In a few weeks, the vein should fade. This treatment does not require anesthesia and can be done in the doctor's office. This treatment is usually done every four to six weeks and the same vein can be treated more than once" (Women's Health, 2010). Laser treatment can effectively treat smaller varicose veins.

This treatment sends very strong burst of light through the skin onto the vein. This makes the vein slowly fade and disappear. Not all skin colors and types can be safely treated with lasers. This treatment does not use needles or incisions in the skin but the heat can be painful. This treatment lasts 15 to 20 minutes. If a vein is bigger than 3 mm it is not very effective for treatment (Women's Health, 2010). Endovenous techniques which include radiofrequency and laser methods are used to treat deeper veins. This procedure can be done in the doctor's office. The doctor puts a catheter into the vein. A probe is then placed in the catheter. The probe then heats up the inside of the vein and closes it off. This device uses radiofrequency or laser energy to seal the vein. Local anesthesia is used for this and slight bruising may accrue after treatment (Women's Health, 2010). For very large varicose veins, surgery is used. Surgical ligation and stripping is used. The problem veins are tied shut and completely removed from the leg from small cuts in the skin. When the vein is removed, it does not affect the circulation of blood in the leg. This surgery does require general anesthesia and done in an operating room.

It normally takes one to four weeks to recover. Most people will have pain in the affected leg (Women's Health, 2010). Pin stripping is another type of surgery for removal. A device called a PIN stripper is placed into a vein. The

tip is then sewn to the vein and when removed, the vein will be pulled out. This procedure is usually done as an outpatient center or operating room and general or local anesthesia can be used. The last treatment out there is called ambulatory phlebectomy. Very tiny cuts are made into the skin, and then hooks are used to pull out the vein. With this procedure, only the part of the leg that is being worked on will be numbed with anesthesia. This is usually done with one treatment. Very small scars will be left with this procedure (Women's Health, 2010). " Death can occur because of bleeding from friable varicose veins, but the mortality associated with varicose veins is almost entirely due to the association of this condition with venous thromboembolism. When treating a patient with varicose veins, the possibility of associated deep venous thrombosis must always be considered because the mortality rate of unrecognized and untreated thromboembolism is 30 to 60%" (Medscape, 2010).

" Bleeding from veins can be life threatening but only if neglected and not managed by pressure and elevation of the leg. Thrombosis close to the groin can result in clots breaking off and traveling to the lungs causing death. Only clots in varicose veins close to the groin can cause this problem" (Milne, 2012). A patient with varicose veins, usually do not have any medical problems. Some people only look at varicose veins as a cosmetic concern. Many people with varicose veins struggle unnecessarily with their appearance. This usually happens more during the summer months. They often limit social activity and experience a significantly change in their quality of life. Many also do not wear any kinds of shorts for this will expose the varicose veins (Vein Healthcare Center, 2011).

“ Varicose veins are a common condition especially in women. They usually occur in the legs but can form in other parts of the body. They usually cause few signs and symptoms. Sometimes varicose veins cause mild to moderate pain, blood clots, skin ulcers or other problems. Many people live a normal and healthy life” (People Science Health, 2011). I have learned a lot of information on this topic. I chose this topic because my boyfriend suffers from this condition and I wanted to learn more about what he goes through other than what he has told me. For the most part, he does not complain about his legs but they do cause a lot of pain and he walks funny sometimes from the pain. He also does not like to wear shorts because of it too.

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