

Spiritual Healing and Varicose Veins

As living beings, we are part of the natural world and interdependent. As you rest and renew, you can also better meet the needs of those who depend on you.

My sister passed away recently and unexpectedly at the young age of 56. Anyone who has lost a loved one knows the intense sense of loss and emotional pain that is involved in the grieving process. The absence of the person who contributed so much to your life is deeply felt while you bereave. In fact, the term bereavement means “to be deprived of someone through death”.

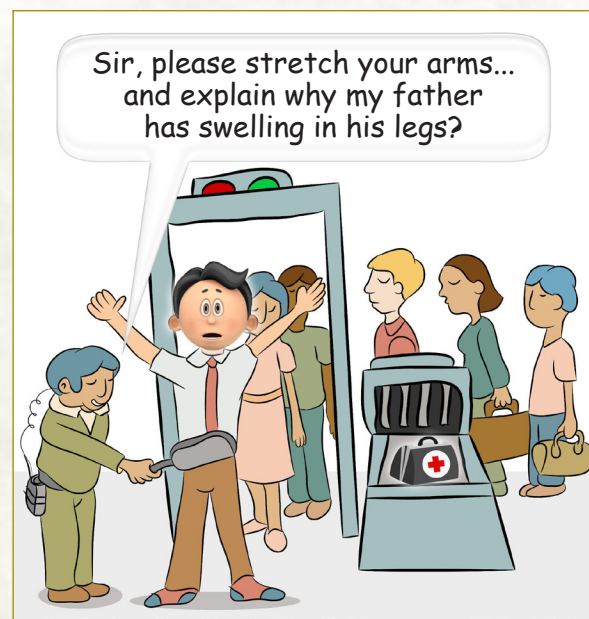
In pursuit of spiritual healing, my wife and I toured some small, quaint towns nestled in the Himalayan Mountains, also the home of many Buddhist monks. It was then that I realized, if you befriend nature, it reciprocates with its timeless beauty and power of healing. From the radiant sun to the ice-cold water of the countless streams and the vibrant colored flowers to the succulent fruits native to the region, one must experience personally to fully appreciate it.

Due credit goes to our energetic and young tour guide, a native to the Himalyan region, who enjoyed narrating history, pausing only when he sensed that his audience in the back seat were napping. He shared stories of his childhood, growing up in a family where his father was a truck driver who had to quit working due to severe recurrent leg cramps and swelling in his legs. Having turned “black and brown”, his legs were set to be amputated by a local surgeon; however, a knowledgeable dermatologist recognized the features of chronic venous insufficiency and actually performed a phlebectomy (removal of veins). Although the legs were saved, his father continues to live with swelling and debilitating leg pain. Over the years, his condition took a toll on the family and his father resorted to alcohol abuse.

Since I was on a retreat to nurture my own spirituality far from the realms of modern medicine that I left behind in America, I maintained silence. Nevertheless, at the conclusion of my trip in the Himalayas, I shared with the tour guide how minimally invasive procedures such as EVLA (endovenous laser ablation) allow us to easily correct the circulatory problems caused by venous insufficiency in legs. He appeared astonished to hear that a simple, 1-hour procedure could have potentially restored full function to his father’s leg.

When we are faced with loss, it is sometimes difficult to feel a sense of gratitude in our lives, yet I had another opportunity to recognize the blessings soon after. Upon

conclusion of the 10-day trip, as we made our way through the airport security checkpoints, I crossed paths with a security officer who politely asked me to stretch out my arms while he whisked his “magic wand”, checking for any metal items. In doing so, I struck up a casual conversation with him about how busy the airport was and, out of habit, mumbled about adverse effects of gravity on blood flow in legs. This astute officer was quick to recognize that I was a Physician and appeared eager to know my area of expertise. His eyes lit up when he learned that I specialized in the treatment of venous leg disorders. He shared that his father has severe swelling, tingling sensation and numbness in his legs that had already caused numerous falls and injury. I explained how swelling in the legs was the most specific sign of underlying, chronic venous insufficiency. The tingling and numbness experienced in the feet is often caused by mechanical pressure of fluid that builds up throughout the day in the legs. I offered him my business card so that he could contact my office for further guidance (and to avoid holding up the security line!). I had never imagined that a 30-second airport security screening could culminate in a varicose vein consultation.



The loss of my sister has brought my family closer together, all with a deeper sense of compassion and appreciation for the loved ones in our lives. Hence, even through loss and grief, the blessings continue. Without grief there is little appreciation for joy. Although my sister leaves behind a void, her absence has propelled me to a spiritual path for a more meaningful existence. Life is still a beautiful journey afterall!

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Summer Newsletter 2019

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- How Well Do You Know Your Legs?



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Varicose Veins During Summer

Because heat dilates the veins, many vein issues increase during the summertime. As the veins expand with higher temperatures, leaky veins can get even worse, leading to more pooling of blood in your legs and problems associated with it such as pain, tiredness, cramps, swelling and clots. There is an increased chance of seeing new spider veins, pain and symptoms. Here are tips to help you enjoy the warm season:

1 Stay Cool

Make sure you wear clothes that won't trap heat. Always use sunblock (SPF 30 or above) not just on your legs, but also on your face and nose, where thinner skin is more prone to developing spider veins.

2 Take a Dive

In addition to offering great respite from the summer heat, swimming is one of the best ways to promote normal circulation in your legs. Swimming is a low-impact exercise that saves your joints from the pounding, yet increases your heart rate and improves circulation overall. Also, cooling exercises like swimming and brisk evening walks are best because the lower temperatures help prevent the blood vessels from dilating.

3 Stay Hydrated

Keeping your body properly hydrated will help it effectively circulate blood, heal injuries faster and allow for healthier skin. Though it seems like a no-brainer, patients with vein problems should pay close attention to their hydration levels during the summer when the heat can easily dry anyone out. If you plan on being out of the A/C, plan to also bring a water bottle along. Avoid caffeine.

4 Avoid Heels

We recommend flats and sandals rather than high heels as they keep your calf muscles from effectively pumping blood out of the leg. Wearing lower heels makes your calves work a little harder, keeping blood pumping throughout your legs and back to your heart where it belongs.

5 Elevate Your Legs

Since veins in our legs have to work against gravity to send blood back to the heart, it helps them if you take periodic 15-minute breaks, elevating your legs above the level of your heart. This facilitates the flow of blood back to the heart and helps “empty” some of the blood pooled in your legs.

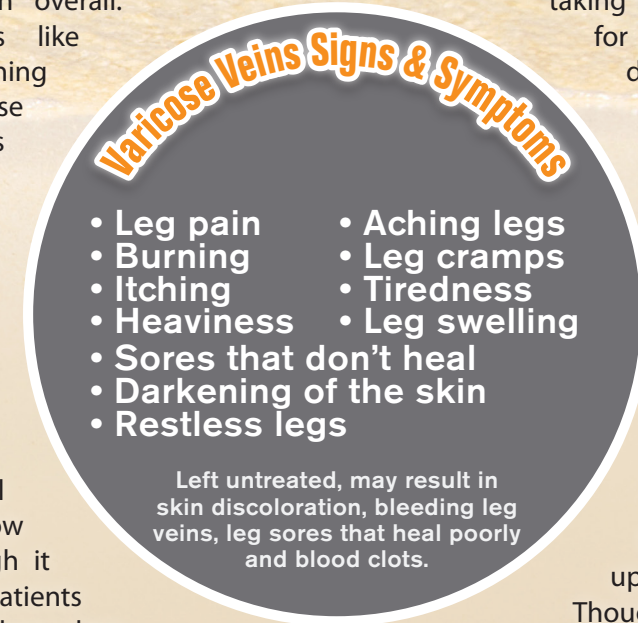
6 Calf Pumps

Our calf muscles play a very important role in helping “push” blood upwards towards the heart against gravity. Sitting or standing for prolonged periods renders the calf pump inactive. We recommend taking breaks to walk or stand on tip toes for 10 second intervals throughout the day whenever possible. Brisk walking, bicycling, using a stepper and swimming are some of the best ways to strengthen calf muscles.

7 Wear Compression Stockings

They may not be at the top of anyone's list of hot summer fashions, but compression stockings put pressure on your legs which help to move blood up and away from your lower legs. Though you may not want to wear them outside during July and August for fear of overheating, wearing them regularly may prevent blood from pooling in your legs, which can cause or worsen vein problems.

Varicose and spider veins have ruined too many summers. To keep them from ruining this one, schedule a free consultation and complimentary vein screening at **Alsara Vein Clinic** by calling **816-396-0245**. Current treatments allow us to permanently treat affected veins with no downtime and you can be rid of your compression stockings within days of treatments. Many insurers, including Medicare, offer coverage.



Varicose veins are always visible from the outside on the skin surface. T/F?

FALSE: Some veins that bulge out and raise the level of the skin can be visible from the outside, however, many varicose veins are located deeper below the surface of the skin. These veins can only be seen with the help of an ultrasound. If you notice any of the signs and symptoms of varicose veins, (leg pain, cramping, restlessness, tiredness, swelling, discoloration of skin or sores that heal poorly) contact your Vein Specialist for an evaluation of venous disease whether you can see veins on the surface of the skin or not.

Spider veins are the smallest version of varicose veins. T/F?

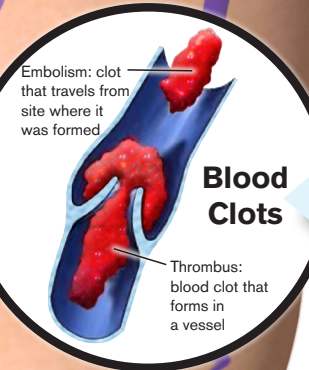
TRUE: Varicose veins are enlarged veins and spider veins are a smaller version of the same condition. Spider veins are present closer to the skin's surface, hence are more easily visible. Since these unwanted veins rarely cause symptoms, treatment of them is considered cosmetic. Using Sclerotherapy, a sclerosant medication is injected into the unwanted veins and seals them shut. It is considered the Gold Standard and the most effective treatment available. Varicose veins, on the other hand, can be deeper below the skin's surface and frequently cause symptoms such as leg pain, itching, burning, cramps, and restlessness. Left untreated, the condition continues to deteriorate and there is a higher risk for blood clots, bleeding, skin infection and poorly healing sores in legs.

Many physicians believe that Restless Leg Syndrome is caused by underlying vein problems in legs. T/F?

TRUE: In a recent study, 98% of patients affected by Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) found relief from symptoms after treatment of varicose veins in their legs. Varicose veins are unhealthy veins that cause pooling of deoxygenated blood in the legs. Calf muscles are also unable to function properly, due to the absence of healthy blood flow, resulting in cramps and restlessness. The symptoms are more noticeable in the evenings and at night because deoxygenated blood and waste products have accumulated in the legs, impairing calf muscles significantly. Medications such as gabapentin, Mirapex and Requip may mask the symptoms (and cause side effects) but do not treat the underlying varicose veins.

Varicose veins significantly increase the risk of blood clots in legs. T/F?

TRUE: New research suggests that varicose veins may quintuple the risk of dangerous blood clots. Clots in deep veins are known as DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) and can be life-threatening if they travel to the lungs or heart.



Varicose veins are one of the most common causes of leg swelling. T/F?

TRUE: Leg swelling is a common and important sign of underlying vein disease. If swelling develops abruptly in one leg, there is a high chance that you may have developed a blood clot in the leg. Swelling, that is more gradual in onset, can vary from the mark that socks leave behind on the skin in the evenings to full-blown edema making it difficult to walk or put on shoes. Due to pooling of blood in the diseased (varicose) veins, swelling worsens as the day progresses and is most noticeable in ankles and feet. Many patients have been placed on diuretics, or water pills, that offer little improvement or temporary relief without addressing the underlying issue of venous insufficiency.

But I need all my veins! T/F?

FALSE: A varicose vein is a diseased blood vessel that serves no useful purpose. On the contrary, treatment can make a significant difference in the quality of life and prevent serious and potentially life-threatening complications. Blood flow is immediately restored through countless other healthier veins in our legs. The days of painful vein stripping are long gone. Modern treatments such as endovenous laser ablation (EVLA) are performed in the comfort of the office setting. There is minimal to no pain and no downtime after the treatment. Almost all Insurers offer coverage for treatment of symptomatic varicose veins.

Ulcers in legs are probably because of diabetes. T/F?

FALSE: Venous leg ulcers are the most common types of leg ulcers, accounting for 80% of all ulcers in the legs. Venous ulcers are often recurrent and may persist for weeks to many years. Severe complications include cellulitis (skin infection), osteomyelitis (infection of underlying bone) and malignant (cancerous) change. Arterial ulcers (such those caused by diabetes) are less common and often affect the areas below the ankle, particularly toes and pressure points.



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