

What Can You Do About Unsightly Leg Veins?

--MEDICAL AND COSMETIC SOLUTIONS--

by Dr. Jodi Schoenhaus

It is estimated that more than 80 million Americans suffer from painful, bulging varicose veins or unsightly spider veins. Until recently, many people have not sought treatment because they were unaware of their choices and treatment options.

Spider veins are the tiny veins that appear right under the outer layer of skin and are seen as small, red, blue or purple vessels, usually in a cluster pattern. Most women begin to notice the appearance of spider veins after childbirth, as a result of direct pressure on the veins in the pelvic region and the lower extremities. Furthermore, progesterone—a hormone involved in the female menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and development of humans—may relax the muscle found in the wall of the vein. Varicose veins are bulging blue veins on the leg, which appear large, twisted, and ropelike, and can cause pain,

swelling or itching.

Heredity, smoking, weight loss, direct trauma, excess physical activity and weight lifting may also cause venous disorders to develop. Varicose and spider veins can be physically and emotionally painful, and sufferers often feel embarrassed, frustrated, and, in some cases, depressed. However, a physical exam and ultrasound study by a licensed physician will determine if the condition is medical or cosmetic, and also will illuminate appropriate options for treatment.

Prior to performing any cosmetic procedure, any underlying vein disorders must be medically controlled. Laser closure, removal of the bulged vein, and ultrasound guided injections are the most accepted procedures for treating medically induced vein issues.

If the unsightly veins are solely a cosmetic problem, they can be treated with

sclerotherapy or by laser ablation, for those individuals who do not want injections. Sclerotherapy utilizes a tiny and painless needle to administer a medication to the vein. This safe procedure is performed in the doctor's office and can be done on one's lunch break! Normal activity can be resumed immediately; however, exercise should be avoided for two days. In addition, patients are required to medical stockings and sun block for a few days after treatment.

Sclerotherapy (as well as laser ablation) may require three to five treatment sessions to remove the spider and varicose veins. Both procedures are 80-90% effective. That said, veins can return or appear in a different formation. With proper medical evaluation, varicose and spider veins can be treated safely and effectively— and yield beautiful, rejuvenated appearing legs. 