

Give your legs a break: Varicose veins can be remedied

BY PATSY L. LAFAYE
SPECIAL WRITER

If you're a woman, it goes without saying you've been told to "keep your legs crossed." Who could guess that advice wasn't all that wise and, in fact, may be more harmful than in keeping with good manners.

We cross our legs without giving it a second thought — in fact, almost half of American women and men cross their legs nearly all of the time. It has become second nature to us, which poses the question, "Is it bad?"

Crossing your legs slows the flow of blood in the leg veins and can cause a painful and disfiguring condition called varicose veins.

After the blood has traveled all through our body in arteries, the blood reverses direction to carry the blood back to our heart through the leg veins.

Veins have one-way valves to keep gravity from pulling the blood downward, and sometimes these valves do not work properly or the vein walls become weak. When this happens, the blood flows back into the veins, building pressure inside the leg veins. This pressure causes the blood to pool and puddle in the veins. They then become stretched and swollen, and may protrude from the surface of the skin.

If you are required to sit for a long period of time — stand and walk for five minutes every hour. You should also flex and rotate your ankles, lift feet and bend your legs back and forth at the knees, and elevate your legs to hip level when resting.

Dr. John Ijjas, vascular surgeon on staff at St. Mary Hospital in Livonia, says maintaining healthy legs is easy.

First and foremost, "Don't cross your legs," says Ijjas. "For nurses, hair dressers, cashiers, line workers and people who stand for hours at a time ... wearing support hose is the best measure to take to protect against this condition."

The St. Mary surgeon also encourages his patients to keep moving. A sedentary lifestyle can lead to a host of health problems and sitting down for routine and significant periods of time only lends itself to occasions where you are apt to cross your legs.

Red flag

When inflamed, the veins in your legs become tender to the touch and can hinder circulation. Tired, cramping and aching legs, ankles and feet are often the result. Varicose and spider veins are usually harmless unless they involve serious complications, such as severe bleeding, ulcers, blood clots and skin tissue damage. Once you have them, the only way to get rid of them is

with medical treatment. They don't go away on their own.

It is important to keep your legs healthy, particularly if you are a candidate for varicose veins. Increasingly, men and women are working in physically demanding jobs and sitting or standing for longer periods of time than ever before. Women are returning to work sooner after giving birth. Pregnancy and heredity are the biggest causes of varicose veins. If you have a parent with varicose veins, there is a good chance that you will develop them, too. People who have a higher risk for weak veins are those who have had multiple pregnancies, who are obese, take birth control pills, wear tight garments, get little exercise, take hormone replacement therapies or stand/sit for long periods of time.

A possible solution for some women might be switching birth control pills to a low-estrogen formulation to avoid hormonal changes.

Remedy the problem

Which medical treatment is used depends on the type, size,

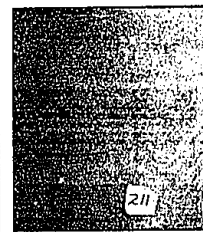
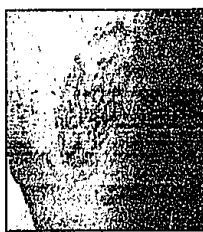
location and depth of the vein problem. Laser treatment is good for the spider veins, but for large varicose veins the treatment may require needle injection (sclerotherapy) or surgical treatment (ligation or stripping). In advanced cases, called chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), varicose veins can lead to chronic swelling, bleeding, ulceration and pigmentation.

If you are required to sit for a long period of time — stand and walk for five minutes every hour. You should also flex and rotate your ankles, lift feet and bend your legs back and forth at the knees, and elevate your legs to hip level when resting. If your job requires you to stand, make an effort to shift your weight from one leg to the other every few minutes.

Wearing support hose and eating a high-fiber diet that includes fruits, vegetables and whole grain breads all work in your body's favor. Other suggestions include maintaining an appropriate body weight and taking up an exercise such as swimming, walking, jogging, cycling or dancing that strengthens the leg muscles and helps push blood up the vein.

Herbal dietary supplements that contain flavonoid or standardized horse chestnut seed extract may help with leg vein circulation and protect against swelling. Vitamin D may also help reduce leg cramps and the mineral zinc can potentially further the healing process.

"Sitting for long periods of



Changes: At left, significantly prominent spider veins and varicose veins mar the upper thigh of this woman's legs. At right, Sclerotherapy takes care of spider veins with no scarring or discoloration.

time, such as long plane or car trips, can lead to phlebitis," said Dr. Luis Navarro, director of the Vein Treatment Center in New York City.

"If a dietary supplement is taken for 10 to 12 days prior to a long plane or car trip, it may help prevent leg and foot swelling," Also, says Navarro, take short walks at least every 46 minutes when traveling.

An unsightly nuisance

Superficial vein problems are a relatively benign disease. A nuisance, a cosmetic concern, a dull ache, but almost never a life-threatening disease.

Varicose veins are usually troublesome rather than disabling, but they occasionally have serious consequences.

Early care and treatment can prevent all of these complications. There are new procedures being developed today to treat the problem that might lessen the discomfort and time off work, but the first step in getting treatment for leg vein problems is to consult a specialist. Many dermatologists and plastic surgeons are trained in these procedures, but if the problem is extensive, a vascular surgeon should evaluate the condition.

For more information contact Dr. John Ijjas of St. Mary Hospital by calling (734) 462-8401 or Dr. Luis Navarro of The Vein Treatment Center in New York City, (212) 876-9284 or visit www.veintreatmentcenter.com

MEDICAL BRIEFS

VACCINE PROGRAM

Providence Hospital and Medical Center is sponsoring an immunization clinic for children from 4-7 p.m. in the Mission Health Medical Center, 37595 Seven Mile Road at Newburgh. The fee is \$6 per child and covers all vaccines (except chickenpox). Don't forget to bring your child's immunization records. For more information call (877) 345-5500.

HAIR LOSS STUDY

Men who are experiencing hair loss are being sought for a research study at

Henry Ford Hospital. The study, conducted by the department of Dermatology, is investigating the effectiveness of an approved drug to treat male pattern hair loss. Patients should be 41-60 years old and currently suffering from hair loss. Medication, doctor visits and parking are free. Patients will be compensated for their time. Call (313) 916-8847 or (313) 916-9759.

MACROBIOTICS

Macro Val of Garden City offers macrobiotic cooking classes. Upcoming series include beginning cooking, picnic foods, summer pasta salads, vitality foods and

all naturally sweet desserts. Learn step-by-step recipes and participate — hands on. For more information and to register for an upcoming class call (734) 261-2856. Dates include Aug. 2, 6-9 p.m.; Aug. 9, 6-9 p.m.; Aug. 16, 6-9 p.m.; Aug. 23, 6-9 p.m. and Aug. 30, 6-9 p.m.

RESTLESS LEG

Restless Leg Syndrome, greater southeast Michigan area support group will meet from 1-2:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 31 at Henry Ford OptimEye, 36184 Central City Parkway in Westland. For information call Lillian Eory at (734) 641-1135 or OptimEye at (734) 427-6200.

40-30-30 SUPPORT

Dr. Martin Tamler and Sharon

Ostalecki will host the first meeting of the 40-30-30 support group in Livonia. Please bring any questions, recipes or ideas that will help others who are on the 40-30-30 nutritional program. The meeting will be held from 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 24 at the Livonia Civic Center Library (32777 Five Mile - between Farmington Road and Hubbard). There is no charge. Call (248) 344-0896 or visit <http://community.mlive.com/cc/Fibromyalgia>

IMMUNIZATION CLINIC

St. Mary Hospital will offer an Infant and Child Immunization Clinic from 8:30-8 p.m. on Thursday, August 12.

Please use the South Entrance of Levan Road. Cost is \$6 per child no matter how many immunizations are given. Please bring all available immunization records with you. No registration is required. Call (734) 655-8940 or (800) 494-1650.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

St. Mary Hospital is offering a health talk at Wonderland Mall as part of the sponsorship of the Wonder Walkers, a walking club at the mall. Learn to identify what makes you tense and explore different ways to deal with tension on 8 10 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 12, in the Wonderland Mall Community Room. There is a fee and you do not need to be a Wonder Walker to attend. To register or for more information, please call (734) 655-8940.

**Eliminate Unwanted Hair...
PURE**

LASER HAIR REMOVAL & TREATMENT CLINIC

Smooth Solutions...
LASER HAIR REMOVAL

Formerly
allure
AESTHETIC SALON & SPA

Call for Your Complimentary Consultation
248.816.6307

3290 W. Big Beaver Road, Suite 410, Troy, MI 48064
Somerset Mall Area

FLINT

Extension & Continuing Education
www.flint.umich.edu/departments/ccc

Register Now!

Troy & Clarkston courses begin September 2

New UM-Flint Troy Center Courses
Anthropology 470-41 "The Americans and Their Cultures"
Anthropology 100-41 "Introduction to Anthropology"
Computer Science 151-41 "Spreadsheets-Excel"
Theatre 230-41 "Acting I: Introduction to Acting"
(Theatre 230 is a for credit or non-credit course)

Courses at Clarkston Senior High School
Computer Science 121-33 "Using a Computer System I"
Computer Science 123-33 "Introduction to Word Processing"

TRUE BLUE

The University of Michigan-Flint is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

A mortgage rate that'll put you at ease.

Now you can enjoy the comfort of a low rate from a company you can depend on—GMAC Mortgage. We're backed by GMAC, America's leader in auto financing for more than 80 years. It's no wonder, then, that people put their trust in us every day when they're looking to buy or refinance a home.

6.75%/7.495%APR
15-Year Fixed Rate

Local Offices
Apply Over The Phone
Fast Credit Decisions

To apply for this great rate, call today.
1.877.750.GMAC

*A \$100,000 15-year loan request with 20% down at 6.75% (7.495% APR) with 7 points (\$3,000) paid would result in 180 monthly payments of principal and interest of \$844.91 per month. Taxes and insurance are extra. The 15-year fixed interest of 6.75% (7.495% APR) is for a limited period of time and only applies to new applications received on or before 11/30/99 with loan closing and funding taking place by 12/31/99. Applicant must lock-in the advertised rate. Terms and conditions apply as well as loan fees and charges. Call for complete details.

GMAC
Mortgage

GM and subsidiary companies and GM Dealers and Dealership employees are not eligible for our Family First Program.

Troy Flint Saginaw Port Huron Detroit Plymouth Taylor Ann Arbor Lansing Kalamazoo Clarkston Lake Orion Grand Rapids Clinton Township

THINKING ABOUT
CENTRAL
AIR
CONDITIONING
LENNOX

FREE ESTIMATES
(734) 525-1930
UNITED TEMPERATURE
8919 MIDDLEBELT • LIVONIA

**PRETTY TILE
UGLY GROUT?**
(THE STUFF BETWEEN THE TILES)

Tired of moldy, missing, dirty, cracked grout? We clean, seal, repair, regrout & stain/change color.

FREE ESTIMATES
The Grout Doctor
248-358-7383

Public Auto Auction

**100+ Cars to be sold!
Two sales per week**

★ Saturday, 10:00 AM
★ Wednesday, 6:00 PM

Preview Friday:
10 AM-4 PM
Preview Wednesday:
10 AM-5 PM

Auction held at:
618 E. WALTON BLVD.
PONTIAC

Call for more info:
1-800/552-1515