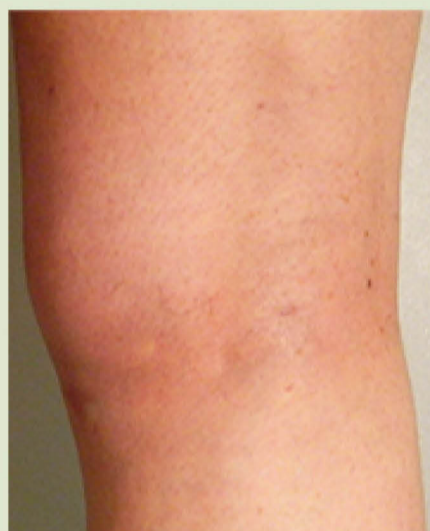


# Varicose Veins and Pregnancy

by Dr. Luis Navarro



*According to the American College of Phlebology, up to 55% of women may experience these bulging, rope-like veins in their lifetime. Varicose veins are most common in the legs, and they are typically found along the inside of the leg, at the back of the calf, or near the ankles. They appear blue in color, and look like a twisted, swollen, bulging vein.*

Unfortunately, pregnant women are more susceptible to them because of several factors. During pregnancy, the body has an increased blood volume which adds pressure onto leg veins together with an enlarged uterus. Additionally, higher hormone levels can cause veins to be more dilated (open), which can contribute to the onset of these pesky varicose veins. For most women who are pregnant, varicose veins are just another discomfort. However if they become pronounced, the veins can bleed, cause clotting, skin color change, severe swelling, and can also cause issues during a vaginal delivery if the veins are present in the vulva. Additionally, the risk of getting varicose veins increases with weight, age, and subsequent pregnancies.

If you have a family history of venous issues, you

are at a higher risk for developing varicose and spider veins. Also, it is likely that weak veins (weak vein walls and valves) are more likely to turn into varicose veins. However, there are some things that you can do to prevent the onset of veins and to find relief if you're a pregnant woman suffering.

For pregnant women to prevent the onset of varicose veins, they can elevate their legs (above the heart) to help optimize circulation. Also, try sleeping on the left side. The inferior vena cava is on the right side, so by laying on the left side, this will help the return of venous blood flow from the legs to the heart. Additionally, pregnant women suffering from venous issues are urged to exercise to increase circulation, and to wear compression stockings for added support. Supportive stockings help redirect venous blood from the superficial vein system to the deep vein system, and then from the deep system back to the heart increasing the efficiency of the second heart. These preventative methods will not only help to prolong the onset of troublesome veins, but they can also offer relief from achy, throbbing veins and/or legs during pregnancy.

The only way to completely find relief from varicose veins is to get rid of them, and the only way to get rid of them is with professional treatment. For moderate varicose veins, the best treatment is painless sclerotherapy or 'injection therapy.' A mild chemical solution is injected into the vein causing it to collapse. The body then reabsorbs the vein and blood is re-routed to a healthy vein, restoring proper venous circulation in the area. At my office, we developed cooling cryotherapy to numb the skin before a patient is injected. Short bursts of cooled air are applied to numb the skin and reduce inflammation during the injections. This results in a more comfortable procedure, faster cosmetic results, and faster healing time. There is no downtime and patients can resume their regular daily activity immediately following treatment.

Large, more severe varicose veins require a slightly more invasive procedure: Endovenous Laser Ablation (EVLA). EVLA was developed and patented by The Vein Treatment Center. EVLA