

Survival and health tips for holiday workers

BY CANDACE SMITH / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Monday, November 30, 2015, 2:09 PM



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

This holiday, retail workers may want to think about taking better care of their feet and legs.

'Tis the season to be jolly . . . and get a foot and leg massage.

Anxious shoppers will line up for discounted presents, while retail workers wait behind their sales counters and in store aisle.

But do those shoppers think about the feet and legs of Walmart or Target employees who stand on them for long hours, as they check their Christmas lists twice?



CATHERINE YEULET/GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

According to Dr. Luis Navarro, 80 million Americans suffer from swollen, painful varicose veins.

Here are some of the real pains of being a retail worker during the holiday season:

Vein and ankle swelling

Sitting at a desk for hours at a time may be considered a health hazard, but standing for just as long is hardly a better alternative.

Dr. Luis Navarro, a vein specialist, sees an average of 100 to 200 people a week in his practice — [The Vein Treatment Center](#).

"Out of the total number of patients I see, a significant portion of them have vein issues, which are heightened from them standing on their feet because of their occupation, such as retail workers, teachers, nurses, etc.," Navarro said.

"Standing on one's feet for a long period of time causes pooling of the blood, which leads to leakage of water from the veins into the tissue resulting in swelling."



DIMAS ARDIAN/BLOOMBERG

There was a 3.7 percent rise in shoppers this Thanksgiving and Black Friday season, according to Reuters.

Poor circulation

Poor circulation is one of the milder, yet significant results retail workers face as they brave crowds of unglued Christmas buyers.

Finish Line sales associate Datwan Bolden, 23, from Coatesville, Pa., works an average of twelve hours a day for one shift.

Eleven of those hours are spent tirelessly on foot.



Sclerotherapy | Female | 37 yrs old
Vein: Varicose

THE VEIN TREATMENT CENTER/DR. LUIS NAVARRO

Sclerotherapy is a recommended medical treatment for varicose and spider veins, along with vein swelling and pain.

"I try to find the right shoes and we get (padded) insoles for them, but nothing works. I'm tired at the end of the day," Bolden said.

Standing for extended hours without proper breaks is a big cause for alarm. "When we stand for long periods of time, the blood pools in the legs and is not properly circulated to and from the heart," Navarro said.

Vein bleeding

Just like other parts of the body, veins also have the ability to bleed.

Navarro warns that untreated, swollen veins can develop into bleeding veins in one's legs and feet.

Ulcers

Venous skin ulcers are one of the worst developments to occur from standing for several hours without rest.

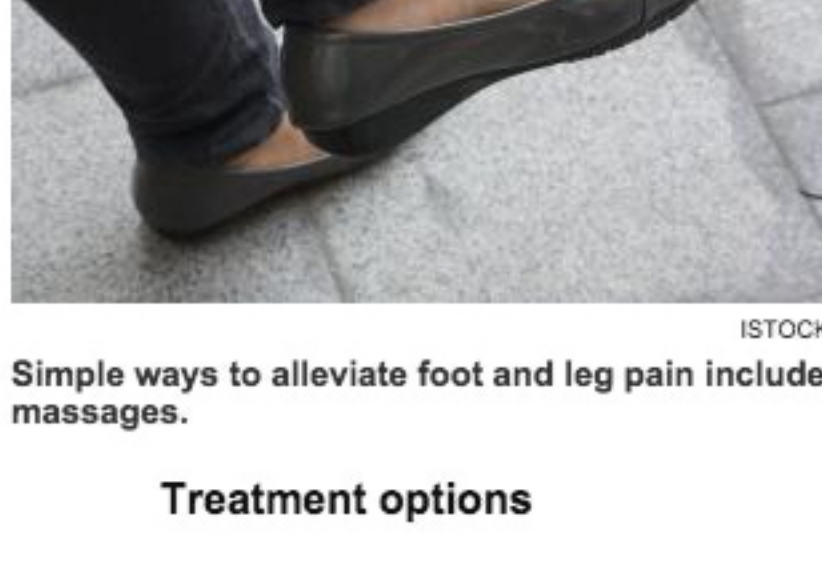
New York-Presbyterian Hospital [notes](#) that the most common early symptom of these ulcers are chronically swollen ankles, which will become worse following continued standing.

Vein inflammation

Vein inflammation, also known as phlebitis, is another serious outcome for retail employees with very little time to rest their feet.

Blood pooling in the legs, which can occur both to sitting or standing for hours, can lead to vein inflammation.

"Because of standing in one place for an extended period of time, the blood is not properly transported back up to the heart, causing it to collect in the legs, and causing veins to swell," Navarro said.



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DAVID FISCHER/GETTY IMAGES

Simple ways to alleviate foot and leg pain include wearing comfortable, properly fitted shoes and massages.

Treatment options

So what should retail employees who have no choice but to work longer hours on foot do to combat future foot pain and swelling?

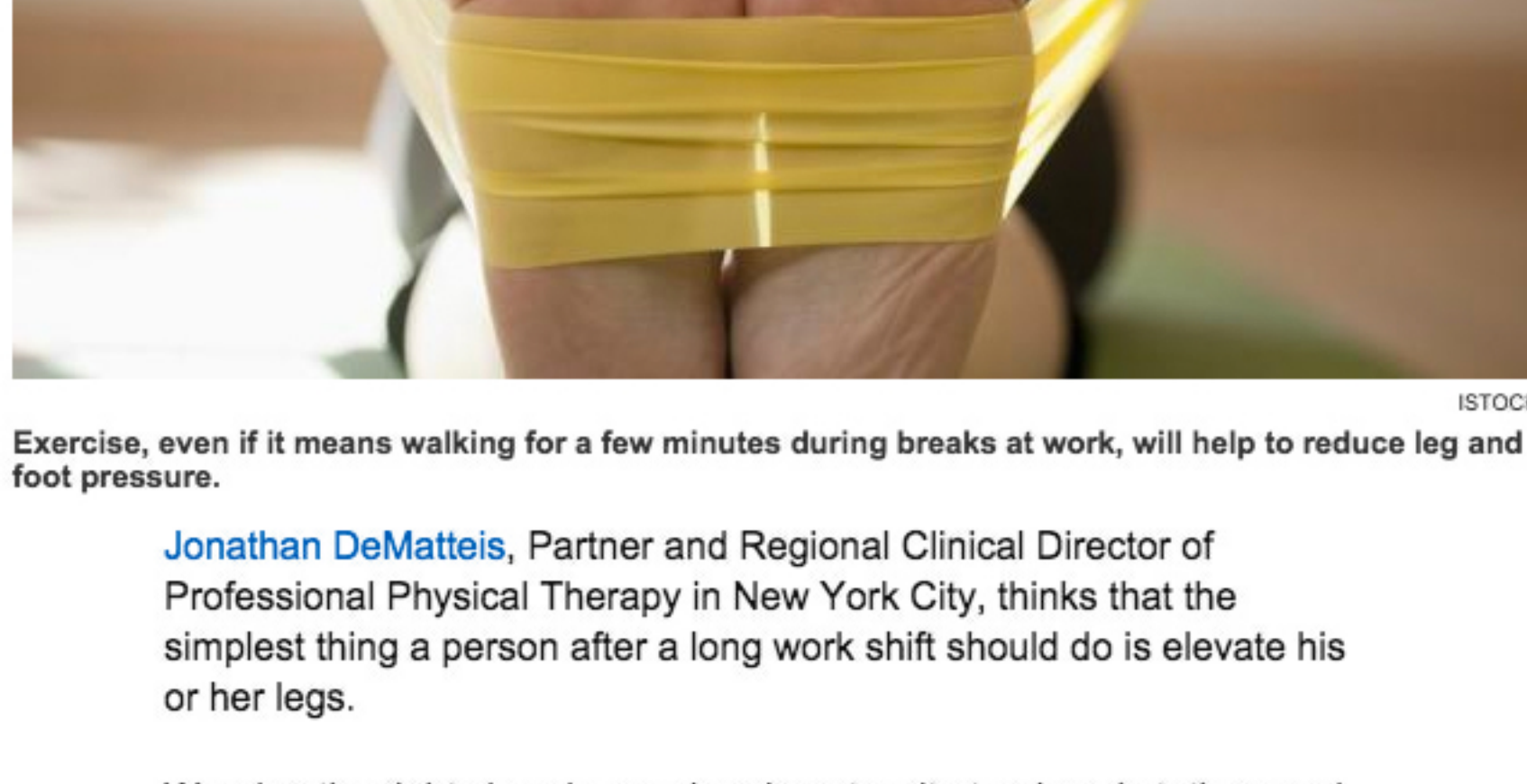
Navarro suggests wearing graduated compression stockings, for starters.

"They will increase the efficiency of the Second Heart and collapse the superficial veins," Navarro said.

"This will delay the appearance of any symptoms and complications."

Sclerotherapy treatment, also known as "injection therapy", is a painless, quick method that decreases pain from tortured feet as well.

This, according to Navarro, is the best way to completely fix problems of vein swelling and pain.



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Exercise, even if it means walking for a few minutes during breaks at work, will help to reduce leg and foot pressure.

[Jonathan DeMatteis](#), Partner and Regional Clinical Director of Professional Physical Therapy in New York City, thinks that the simplest thing a person after a long work shift should do is elevate his or her legs.

Wearing the right size shoes, shoe inserts, sit-stand workstations and floor mats are also useful solutions.

"Ill-fitting shoes, or shoes, that lack the necessary cushion or support, may lead to pain or injury," DeMatteis said.

Stretching and walking before, during and after work shifts are also extremely important in lessening or completely avoiding future foot and leg problems during the holidays and beyond.