

# PREGNANCY & born

OUR

*handy how-to*

*cravings*

## Prevent varicose veins

**D**uring pregnancy, women are particularly susceptible to developing varicose veins for a variety of reasons, including increased blood volume, pressure in the leg veins and hormone levels, says Luis Navarro, MD, director of The Vein Treatment Center in New York City. While they don't always cause discomfort, it's not uncommon for the blue bulges to result in irritation, swelling, painful rashes, skin ulcers, blood clots and skin infections.

### Beat 'em

"Though varicose veins can sometimes be genetic, there are simple steps a woman can take toward reducing the chances of them forming during her pregnancy," assures Navarro. Walking around regularly throughout the day can keep your blood flowing, and engaging in any type of exercise that strengthens the "second heart"—aka the muscles of the calf and foot—can be beneficial, too. Navarro also recommends elevating your feet 6-12 inches above your heart whenever possible and at night to aid circulation. Compression stockings can help as well, he says, by preventing swelling and vein formation.

### Treat 'em

If preventative measures fall short and your varicose veins don't improve postpartum, there are a few things you can do to remedy the problem. Sclerotherapy is the most common treatment and usually takes place six to eight weeks after delivery. "This procedure can be done in your doctor's office, and the vein will fade in a few weeks," says Navarro. Endovenous laser techniques can be used for treating deeper veins and can also be performed at the office. Surgical procedures are available for treating large varicose veins—talk to your practitioner about the best option for you.



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