

# Running and Varicose Veins: Are They Connected?

BY SHARON FEIEREISEN ON DECEMBER 2, 2014 6:00 AM



I run every day so I wasn't that excited when one of New York City's top vein specialists, **Dr. Luis Navarro** of the Vein Treatment Center, said that there was long thought to be a relationship between running and varicose veins. He explained that, of course, exercise is very good for vascular health and that it improves circulation. He calls the "second heart" a system of muscles, veins, and valves in the calf and foot that work together to push deoxygenated blood back up to the heart and lungs; this is a good thing. The problem is if you're running long distances wearing sneakers that don't offer the proper support, the impact may very well cause veins to swell, which is not a good thing.

**Here's what you need to know about treatment and prevention, according to Dr. Navarro:**

1. Varicose and spider veins are different. Varicose veins are the thick, ropey veins that protrude out of the legs, and spider veins are the small, thin blue blood vessels that can be seen under the skin.
2. Both of these conditions are hereditary, there is a congenital predisposition to weak vein walls, but sometimes their appearance can be delayed and the symptoms can be improved by healthy lifestyles. For example, avoid cigarettes and a bad diet, and make the effort to eat healthy and exercise. Hormonal birth control can cause these veins to form.
3. If varicose veins run in your family, or if you already have them, wear Graduated Compression Stockings. Compression stockings act like an added layer of muscle, aiding the performance of the "second heart" and venous circulation. They are tight at the ankle and looser as they go up, which helps prevent swelling and vein formation. These can be purchased at medical supply stores.
4. Spider and small varicose veins can be treated with sclerotherapy, a painless injection treatment. During treatment, a mild chemical solution is injected into the vein that is causing the issue. The sclerosing agent irritates the walls of the vessel, 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. For large varicose veins, surgery is not performed anymore. We used in-office Endovenous Laser Ablation (EVLA), in which a laser fiber is used to close the main vein from the inside under local anesthesia and no down-time.

**Have you noticed an increase in varicose veins when you run consistently?**