

Why Some People Get Spider Veins And Others Don't

Liz Ritter , Executive Managing Editor | September 17, 2015



Bathing suit season may be over, but for anyone who has **spider veins**, wearing shorts, a skirt or anything that exposes your legs can be scary. Luckily, there are some ways to prevent them—and one rather simple treatment to get rid of them.

Lesser-Know Culprits

According to New York dermatologist **Snehal Amin, MD**, spider veins are worsened by prolonged standing, which can result in slowing of blood flow and increased pressure in the leg veins. "Blockage of blood returning to the heart and hormonal changes seen in pregnancy can also make spider veins worse," he says. "Trauma to the vessels through certain types of dance or exercise can make the veins enlarged as well. Many people see clusters of veins where they had a blunt trauma on their leg."

The Desk Exercise You Need to Deter Them

But, besides standing too long, we're sure you've heard the warning of what happens if you are one of those people who crosses their legs as they sit. "It is true that too much standing over the years is a contributing factor to spider veins, but you may not know that sitting too long can also cause spider veins," says vein specialist **Luis Navarro, MD**. "If you are sitting all day, try and elevate your legs. If it is too hard to elevate your legs, make sure that you get up and walk at least every hour. Also, you can rotate your ankles to **activate muscles** of your second heart (calf muscles, feet and surrounding veins). It is good to rotate your ankles to get blood flowing and awaken these muscles."

Are Genetics to Blame?

Sure, you can prevent spider veins by avoiding the above triggers, but some people are also genetically predisposed to vein issues. "Genetics is the most important factor in developing spider veins," says Las Vegas dermatologist **Alison Tam, MD**. "Millions of women work on their feet or sit at desk jobs, but they do not develop spider veins; millions of women get pregnant and do not develop spider veins; millions of women gain weight or have venous disease in their legs, but do not develop spider veins. It is the interplay of genetics, environment and how you care for yourself that dictates whether or not you develop spider veins, at what rate, and what age they appear." An interesting fact: 60 percent of people who have spider veins inherit them from their mother's side, according to Dr. Navarro.

In-Office Treatments to Try

Most doctors will tell you that the simplest treatment to getting rid of spider veins is sclerotherapy, where a salt water or detergent, such as sotradecol, is injected into the vein, causing it to collapse or sort of "shrivel" away. "You can also use the Nd:YAG laser to destroy blood vessels in the legs without damaging the overlying skin," Dr. Amin says, adding that multiple sessions are required for both treatments.