

VARICOSE VEINS

Many women first develop unsightly varicose veins, or find that they get worse, during pregnancy. As your uterus grows, it puts pressure on the large vein on the right side of your body, which in turn increases pressure in the leg veins. The amount of blood in your body increases when you're pregnant, adding to the burden on your veins overall.

There are many health problems that can develop from varicose veins such as irritation, swelling, painful rashes, skin ulcers, blood clots and severe infection, and every pregnant woman especially needs to know what they can do to prevent or treat them.

Phlebologist **Dr. Luis Navarro** shares his tips on how to avoid varicose veins during pregnancy:

- **GET REGULAR EXERCISE.** Any type of exercise that strengthens the "second heart" - the muscles of the calf and foot - is beneficial. Exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, three times a week. Suggested activities include walking, running, swimming and bicycling.
- **MONITOR HORMONE INTAKE.** Birth control pills and hormone replacement therapy constrict blood vessels and can weaken vein valves and vein walls.
- **AVOID PROLONGED PERIODS OF SITTING AND STANDING.** Rotate your ankles and feet whenever possible, walk for at least 10 minutes every hour, and point and flex your toes to promote leg vein circulation.

- **ELEVATE YOUR FEET.** Raise your feet six to 12 inches above your heart whenever possible to assist circulation.

- **EAT A HIGH FIBER & LOW SALT DIET.** Salt retains water and constipation puts pressure on the venous system.

- **CONSIDER DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS.** Vitamins C and E act as antioxidants, which are good for circulation. Flavonoids, butcher's broom, and Horse Chestnut Seed Extract (HCE50) improve venous circulation and decrease symptoms of venous disease.

- **AVOID CROSSING YOUR LEGS.** Leg crossing constricts veins and increases venous pressure.

Dr. Luis Navarro, is the Director of the Vein Treatment Center who treats many pregnant women every year. For more information go to www.veintreatmentcenter.com.

