

Ask the Expert: Why do I have Spider Veins?

by *Ageist Beauty* on June 30, 2015 with 0 Comments in [Body Treatments](#), [Cosmetic Surgery](#)



My family and I will be leaving on our annual trip to Spain in two weeks. As such, I recently went shopping for some new summer clothes. I'm not a fan of store fitting rooms (e.g., harsh lighting, cramped space, waiting in line, etc.). However, I decided to go for it this time, instead of risking a possible second trip to return any ill-fitting items. I tried on a particular [James Perse](#) cotton skirt and it looked great (and it fit perfectly!). I admit, I was feeling myself a bit. Just as I was turning around to see how the skirt looked from the back, I noticed red, purple and blue veins clearly visible in the area behind my knees. Spider veins! I had never noticed them before. All thoughts immediately went from my new skirt to my legs that looked like they belong to someone else – someone much older than I.

Of course, I had to turn to an expert to find out more about spider veins and more importantly how to get rid of them. I sat down with [Luis Navarro, M.D., FACS, FACPh](#), founder and medical director of [The Vein Treatment Center](#) in New York City. Dr. Navarro is a pioneer in the development of new techniques to treat varicose and spider veins.

What causes spider veins?

Spider Veins are largely genetic meaning that it runs in your family. Genetic predisposition combined with certain lifestyle choices such as a job that demands you to be on your feet for long hours, obesity, etc. can accelerate the development of both varicose and spider veins making them worse and more apparent over time.

What is the difference between spider veins and varicose veins?

It is important to note the differences in spider veins and varicose veins. Spider veins are usually fine and smaller in appearance compared to varicose veins which are usually large and protruding. Spider veins measure less than one millimeter in diameter (although they sometimes can cluster together causing a 'bruise' like appearance on your skin). Varicose veins again are larger, and measure at least 4 to 5 millimeters in diameter. Varicose veins are known to be painful at times, and can be soft and spongy to the touch as they are raised up from the skin.

Aside from appearance, the two types of veins also differ in their definitions as well. Varicose veins are comprised of weak vein valves and vein walls that are unable to stop blood from flowing in the wrong direction. Blood therefore leaks back down the legs and collects in the leg veins. This pooling of blood causes the veins to expand and protrude from the skin. Spider veins on the other hand are simply enlarged capillaries, and again appear much smaller in diameter compared to varicose veins. Spider veins are caused by increased pressure in the veins. These veins are less noticeable unless they are clustered together.

Is there any way to prevent spider veins?

Sometimes if these veins are genetic, it is hard to prevent them. However you can slow their onset and try to prevent them by not being on your feet repeatedly for long hours, by maintaining a healthy body weight, and also by elevating your feet. When you do get the opportunity to sit or if you are relaxing at home, I suggest always elevating your feet to about 6 inches above your heart. This will help promote healthy blood flow back to the heart and give those veins a rest.

What are the most effective ways to eliminate spider veins?

The most effective way to remove spider veins are with sclerotherapy. During sclerotherapy treatment, a mild chemical solution is injected into the incompetent vein or capillary. 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.

Are there any topical solutions that are effective at minimizing the appearance of spider veins?

While sclerotherapy, or 'injection therapy', is the most common and most effective treatment for spider and varicose veins on the legs, there are creams containing vitamin K that are sold to minimize the appearance of spider veins.

Are these permanent solutions or will the spider veins come back over time?

If you are prone to getting spider veins, it is hard to ensure that they will never come back or that new ones won't pop up in different areas. These treatments are great and can clear up the treated veins for years, however if you continue to be hard on your legs and veins and are on your feet a lot, the veins may come back and new ones may pop-up as well.

[The Vein Treatment Center](#) is located at 327 East 65th Street, New York City