

# How to Get Rid of Those EVIL Spider Veins

Don't give up—there *is* a way!

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Talk to any woman with spider veins on her legs, and she'll probably tell you that they're the bane of her existence. And if you're one of the women who has them, you're not alone: Close to 55 percent of women have some type of vein problem, according to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health](#).



## So What Causes Them?

The thin, twist-and-turning veins get their name from resembling spider legs. And if your mom—or someone else in the family—has them, there's a good chance you'll get them, as well; the most common cause is genetics (although you won't *necessarily* get them if your mom did).

Certain lifestyle choices can up your risk for developing spider veins, too.

"Smoking, obesity, and hormonal birth control can all contribute to the formation of spider veins," says Luis Navarro, M.D., a board-certified surgeon and the director of the [Vein Treatment Center](#) in New York City. "Smoking and obesity can restrict circulation, which in turn causes vessels to swell, which causes spider veins."

Obesity, he explains, puts a lot of stress on the body in general, which can be harmful to the circulatory system. And birth control alters your hormones, which can weaken vein walls and speed up the formation of spider and varicose veins (a more serious vein problem that can cause pain and lead to serious health issues like deep vein thrombosis).



## Is There *Anything* You Can Do to Prevent Them?

Unfortunately, there's not much you can do. When it comes to heredity, prevention isn't possible, says Navarro. If spider veins don't run in your family, though, working up a sweat might help keep them away. "Running and exercise are beneficial for circulation, which can help prevent veins from forming," he says.



## What Are the Treatment Options?

The most effective option is sclerotherapy, which "consists of injecting a solution, made out of salt, fatty acids, and glycerin, into the faulty vein," says Navarro. This collapses the vein and allows the blood to flow back safely into the blood stream. Sclerotherapy feels just like any normal injection, only takes a few minutes, and doesn't require any downtime. "Some patients may experience bruising, but [that] usually clears up in one to two weeks," says Navarro.

A completely painless version of the treatment, called cryo-sclerotherapy, incorporates a blast of cool air that numbs the skin. The last option is foam sclerotherapy, which uses foam to cling to the vein wall, but can take longer to see results. "This is typically performed on larger veins," says Navarro.

When it comes to these procedures, the number of sessions you'll need varies depending on the severity of the veins—although Navarro taps the average at two to four treatments and a follow-up appointment with your doctor. Each treatment costs between \$500 and \$1,000 per session.

Although pricey, there is very little chance of side effects. "All spider veins start healing immediately [after treatment]," says Navarro. What's more, "Patients will usually not develop any more. However, there is a chance that different veins will form over time, especially if veins are genetic."

In addition to the in-office treatments, a [horse chestnut seed extract supplement](#) (available at health stores) can help alleviate swelling and redness—but it won't get rid of the spider veins, says Navarro. Makeup and self-tanner can help camouflage, but no topical treatment will remove the swelling and discoloration completely.