

Fact or Fiction: Your varicose vein myths dispelled

Fact or Fiction: Wearing high-heeled shoes can contribute to varicose veins:

Fact: While wearing high-heeled shoes doesn't directly cause varicose veins they can worsen existing vein problems. The calf muscle serves as the pump that circulates blood up and out of the veins. Optimal calf pumping action is generated from the systematic contraction and relaxation of the calf muscle. High heels keep your calf muscle in the contracted position limiting their ability to pump blood up the veins. While wearing high heels for limited periods of time is okay, wearing them 8-10 hours per day is discouraged.

Fact or Fiction: Crossing your legs can cause varicose veins:

Fiction: Sitting for prolonged periods of time in any position can increase your risk of varicose veins. However, there is no medical research to support that periodic crossing of the legs causes varicose veins.

Fact or Fiction: Sun exposure can cause spider veins

Fact: Although exposure to UV light, either from the sun or tanning lights probably doesn't increase the risk of leg vein disorders, it can absolutely contribute to the development of spider veins on the face and certain types of skin cancers.

Fact or Fiction: Leg discomfort and varicose veins are a normal part of the aging process:

Fiction: Leg discomfort and varicose veins are not normal at any age! Varicose veins and vein disorders however, do worsen with age. If you suffer from heaviness, aching, swelling, or fatigue of the legs and/or varicose veins, you should be evaluated by a vein specialist.

Fact or Fiction: There are herbal remedies which can help varicose veins

Fact: There may be some truth to this; however it must be interpreted with caution. There is limited evidence to suggest that horse chestnut seed extract may improve some of the symptoms associated with varicose veins such as swelling, pain, and itching but it does NOT treat the underlying vein disorder. Any symptom improvement experienced while taking the herb typically returns again immediately upon cessation and it doesn't prevent vein disorders from worsening. This herb can be expensive and has a very limited place in the management of varicose veins. Taking it should never replace formal evaluation and treatment by an experienced vein specialist.

Fact or Fiction: Varicose veins are only a cosmetic problem:

Fiction: The American College of Phlebology estimates that varicose veins and related vein disorders affect over 80 million Americans. These disorders can increase the risk of developing life threatening blood clots, cause open wounds on the legs, cause significant leg swelling, pain, and discomfort, and impair quality of life. The good news is varicose veins and vein disorders are highly manageable conditions.