

SKIN CONDITIONS

Venous insufficiency disorder and its resulting high pressure in the veins of the lower extremities can show itself in many ways, primarily by its effects on the skin itself. Remember that the larger veins connect to smaller veins, which connect to tiny veins eventually leading into the tiniest veins and capillaries feeding the skin surface. The backward flow of blood from venous insufficiency disorder causes increased blood pressure, which is in turn transmitted out to the skin surface. There are many visible conditions of the skin other than the varicose, reticular and spider veins. Edema or swelling of the skin and deeper tissues is frequently noted and seen because of the indentation marks caused by stockings, shoes or pushing on the skin with one's finger noting an indentation mark. Over time, the increased back pressure can increase the thickness and rigidity of the skin making some areas of the lower leg seem thicker or tougher than others. Frequently, there is a change in color of slight reddish or a "brightness" to the skin. Over time, larger areas can turn to a reddish or purple brown staining and actual discoloration. Hair can be lost on the leg as the skin becomes shiny from swelling and edema and the thickening. Many times patients and physicians alike confuse this skin irritation or color change with a type of dermatitis. In fact, the condition is properly called stasis dermatitis.

Unfortunately, many individuals are treated with creams, ointments and other agents thinking that it is a rash or some other type of dermatitis condition. The proper treatment of course, is to correct the venous insufficiency problem in the first place. There are other terms given to more advanced conditions of skin change, but ultimately the end result of uncorrected long-standing venous reflux and high pressure is the development of an open, draining ulcer or "sore" frequently beginning in the inner or outer aspect of the ankle and lower leg. Some times these skin conditions can cause invasion of bacteria leading to true cellulitis or infection. Treatment of these skin conditions caused from venous insufficiency consists of reversing the high pressure with leg elevation, proper use of medical grade compression stockings and ultimately correction of the venous reflux source.

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