

EASY STEPS TO HEALTHY LEGS

Whether I'm spending the day doing rounds at the hospital, or shopping for the perfect purse, I return home with my legs throbbing and in pain. My mother told she had a trick to fight the pain. She learned it in her yoga class. She comes home, lies on the floor and puts her legs up flat against the wall.

Intrigued, I tried this little manoeuvre. While I lay there on the ground, with my husband giving me a quizzical look, I came to three conclusions. 1. My mother is to blame for my bad genes. 2. My mother still knows more than I do, even though I am a doctor. 3. If you have to go to out right after work, this trick is quite impractical.

So I did a little bit of research and got to the root of all the pain.

Your body's circulatory system has two kinds of blood vessels: arteries and veins. Arteries have thick, muscular walls and carry oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of your body. They help the heart to pump the blood by gently contracting with each heartbeat.

Veins have thin walls and return blood back to the heart. They have valves that open when the blood flows past them, then close after each heartbeat to stop the blood from flowing backwards. When weak or damaged valves allow blood to flow backward, it collects at the bottom of the leg. This pooling increases the pressure in the vein and causes aching legs.

If the pooling of blood persists, the vein enlarges, loses its shape and the valves break. These damaged veins then become tortuous and appear under the skin as varicose veins.

Men and women of all ages may develop varicose veins depending on their genetics and lifestyle. Luckily, varicose veins are not life-threatening but, if left untreated they will expand and to lead to aching, throbbing and itchy legs.

Healthy Legs- What Can You Do

Decrease the amount of time you spend standing and sitting. When you're immobile, your calf muscle does not pump blood back up to the heart. Blood pools in the legs and damages the valves.

Don't cross your legs while you're sitting and don't wear tight knee-high socks. Both of these actions decrease the blood flow back to the heart.

Excess weight is another issue, though perhaps harder to control. A large abdomen puts added pressure on your pelvic veins and leads to pooling of blood in the lower limbs. This is why women often develop varicose veins during pregnancy. The uterus, as it grows, puts increasing pressure on the veins in the legs and prevents the blood from returning to the heart. Hormonal changes during pregnancy lead to relaxation of all the

bodies veins, leading to more stretching and pooling. Up to 40% of pregnant women develop varicose veins. Though they may disappear after birth of the baby, if the damage to the valves is permanent, so will the varicose veins.

Stop the Pain – Permanently

If you can't change the fact that you have to stand or sit for prolonged hours at work, then you should get medical-grade compression stockings. You should be measured and fitted as otherwise, you can purchase a pair that is too tight and actually do more harm than good. At our office, we have a certified fitter on site, who measures our patients legs and orders custom fitted stockings for them. The whole process takes less than twenty minutes and most health plans cover the cost of two pairs of stockings per year.

I wear my compression stocking almost every day. They take three minutes to put on, so when I'm in hurry, I have no choice but to resort to my mother's trick at the end of the day. The bottom line is, if you want to have healthy legs, see your doctor for a prescription today.