



Photos by V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan

Dr. Steven Kaufman, a Fort Collins general and vascular surgeon who specializes in treating vein disorders, uses a new technology called Closure to treat varicose veins using a catheter and radiofrequency.

Erasing the pain

BY KELLI LACKETT

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For Beth Mizer, just standing at the sink and washing dishes is a dream come true.

Just a year ago, Mizer would feel heaviness and fatigue in her legs when she was standing.

"I would be standing doing dishes and I would have to talk myself through it and tell myself 'I can finish this.'"

Mizer, 43, had varicosities in the veins in her legs, a problem she has struggled with since she was pregnant with her first child 21 years ago. The started to worsen about 7 years ago, she said.

In February, Mizer turned to Dr. Steven Kaufman, a Fort Collins general and vascular surgeon, for help. Kaufman used a new device, called the VNUS ClosureFAST catheter, to treat varicose veins. The procedure is much faster, less expensive, less invasive and has virtu-

Closure procedure for varicose veins

Visit Dr. Steven Kaufman's Web site at www.totalvein.net or call 498-8346.

For more information about VNUS Closure, visit www.vnus.com

ally no recovery time compared to older surgical treatments such as vein stripping. The FDA cleared the procedure in fall 2006.

"Patients can go back to work that day. ... I never write a prescription for pain," Kaufman said. "This (procedure) is becoming a large part of my practice."

By contrast, Patients who undergo vein stripping usually experience post-operative pain and may take weeks to resume normal activities, Kaufman said.

In vein stripping surgery, usually performed under general anesthesia, the diseased vein is pulled out of the leg. In the Closure procedure, the dis-

eased vein is closed.

The underlying cause of varicose veins is a condition called venous reflux disease, which afflicts more than 25 million Americans. Valves in the veins become damaged and fail to regulate the flow of blood from the legs to the heart. Blood pools in the legs, causing swelling and pain.

Two-thirds of those who suffer from venous reflux are women.

"It can be caused by an increase in blood volume during pregnancy," Kaufman said.

Unlike spider veins, varicose veins protrude from the skin.

Venous reflux also can cause skin ulcers and other skin changes.

Before being treated by Kaufman, Mizer's legs were covered with protruding varicosities and her right ankle was discolored from ulcers.

"I was Christmas shopping (two years ago) and I was telling myself that I would get a few more things and then go home and put my feet up when I felt something dripping down my legs. It was blood. The veins had burst open and were bleeding. The skin got so thin down there, it just broke."

Mizer had undergone surgery with two other

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'It keeps healing and looking better. The biggest thing to me is I feel great.'

Beth Mizer

Pain

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doctors — one in Cheyenne and one in Denver — to try to close her varicose veins, but each time they opened again. She was at her wits end when she finally turned to Kaufman.

Kaufman performs the Closure procedure in his office using local anesthesia. It usually takes about a half hour.

"Patients come in with a full deck and the leave with a full deck," he said.

He makes an incision in the groin area near the intersection of the great Saphenous and femoral veins. He threads a sheath and then a catheter through the diseased vein using ultrasound to ensure correct placement. As Kaufman removes the catheter, radiofrequency heats the vein, causing the vein wall to contract and the vein to close. Closing the vein redirects blood to healthy veins.

"I've done over 150 since March, and I have never had a vein reopen," Kaufman said.

Laser and radiofrequency catheters have been used to treat varicose veins for several years, but Kaufman said Closure catheter is the "second generation" in radiofrequency technology. It reduces the time it takes



VNUS Medical Technologies

The new VNUS ClosureFAST catheter uses radiofrequency to close varicose veins. Dr. Steven Kaufman, a Fort Collins general and vascular surgeon, uses the new technology to treat varicose veins.

to remove the catheter from the leg from 15 to 20 minutes to 2 to 3 minutes.

For Mizer, the proof of success is in the way her legs look and feel. She still has discoloration from the healed ulcers, but the varicosities — and the pain — is gone.

"It keeps healing and looking better," she said. "The biggest thing to me is I feel great."



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