

New Varicose Veins Treatment Less Painful

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It's estimated that 72 percent of women and 42 percent of men have varicose veins by age 60.

Varicose veins are veins that have become dilated, dysfunctional or twisted. Varicose veins affect one out of two people over age 50 (Source: NIH). These veins are commonly found on the backs of the calves or on the inside of the leg. They develop when valves in the veins that allow blood to flow toward the heart stop working properly. As a result, blood pools in the veins and causes them to get larger.

Besides cosmetic problems, varicose veins tend to be bulging and unsightly. They are often painful, and can cause swelling, leg ulcers, delayed healing of wounds on the legs, and other health problems. Doctors still don't know exactly what causes varicose veins, but they do know that they seem to run in families and are more common in women than men. Obesity and pregnancy can also increase the odds a person will develop varicose veins.

Until recently, there have been two main options for treatment of varicose veins, both generally done as outpatient procedures: vein stripping, which is usually performed under general anesthesia, and endovenous laser treatment, a less invasive procedure, generally done in a doctor's office under local anesthesia. Goals of vein stripping are to relieve pain, and to improve circulation through the venous system by removing pathways of blood reflux. Vein stripping involves the removal of the saphenous vein in the leg and any varicose tributary veins. Laser ablation sends intense bursts of light onto the veins to seal them off, causing them to dissolve over time. It generally takes less than an hour and gets patients back to their regular activities with less down time than the vein stripping method.

The FDA recently approved a new treatment for varicose veins that uses radio frequency energy. The treatment, called the VNUS ClosureFAST catheter is much faster, less invasive, and has a very quick recovery time, compared to other available treatment options, according to vascular surgeons now performing the procedure. This varicose vein treatment uses ultrasound to guide a catheter into the vein, then as this catheter is removed, radio frequency energy heats the vein, causing the vein wall to contract and the vein to close. The entire procedure takes just a couple of minutes and the patient is able to go home within about an hour.

Orlando vascular surgeon G. Kendrix Adcock, M.D., calls this technique, "a lot less traumatic to surrounding tissues and a lot better as far as patient comfort," noting that patients who undergo vein stripping or laser treatment for varicose veins can experience bruising and pain that last for days. Dr. Adcock says another advantage for patients is that, "the recuperative phase is so short they're able to get back to normal activities faster. A lot of these people engage in running, power

walking, yoga, those kinds of activities, and they're able to return to them very, very quickly." Generally, patients are able to return to regular activities in about 48 hours. Dr. Adcock adds, "I've been practicing vascular surgery for almost 25 years now, and this is a quantum leap forward."

Additional Resources:

- [VNUS ClosureFAST](#)

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