



# Varicose Veins

## Natural Remedies for Problems with Venous Circulation

Varicose veins are externally visible, gnarly, bluish veins. The word *varicose* comes from the Latin root *varix*, which means “twisted.” Varicose veins are a common condition in the U.S., as up to 60 percent of Americans develop them. They occur more frequently in women than men, especially women over 40.

Any vein can become varicose, but the veins most commonly affected are those in the legs and feet because standing and walking increase the pressure in these veins in your lower body. Veins contain one-way valves which help keep the blood moving in the direction of the heart. When these valves collapse, varicose veins develop.

Veins also have an elasticity which helps maintain pressure in the veins to assist the blood in its return to the heart. As the veins lose this elasticity and the pressure inside the veins increases from stagnant blood, the veins balloon outward.

Although most people view varicose veins as a cosmetic problem, varicose veins can cause pain and discomfort. They are a sign that venous circulation and vascular tone is impaired and, in severe cases, varicose veins may be accompanied by more severe symptoms, such as:

- An achy or heavy feeling in your legs;
- Burning, throbbing, muscle cramping and swelling in your lower legs.
- Itching around one or more of your veins.
- Skin ulcers near your ankles—this can be a sign of severe degeneration of blood vessels and requires immediate medical attention.
- Hemorrhoids are varicose veins which are located specifically in and around the rectum.

Varicose veins can also lead to more serious conditions and signal a higher risk for other disorders of the circulatory system. From a natural healer’s perspective, varicose veins often indicate a need to cleanse the colon and liver.

Some factors which increase risk of developing varicose veins are: age (our blood vessels lose elasticity as we get older), gender (women tend to develop this condition more often than men), genetics (if other members of your family have them, there’s a good chance you will, too), physical condition (obese and physically inactive people tend to develop them more often) and standing for long periods of time, which forces the veins to fight gravity to return the blood to the heart. Varicose veins

can arise from constipation, high impact physical activity like running and even pregnancy.

Fortunately self-help measures can do much to alleviate the pain—and prevent the complications—of varicose veins. Exercising, losing weight, avoiding tight clothes, elevating your legs when they feel tired, heavy or painful, and avoiding long periods of standing or sitting can ease pain and prevent them from getting worse. The varicose veins that develop during pregnancy generally improve on their own two to three months after delivery.

Medical interventions for varicose veins include burning, cutting, or collapsing the veins so that the body can reroute the blood in them through other, functioning veins. There are some very effective natural remedies, however.

Vari-Gone is a formula available in a capsule form and a cream form for topical application. It contains two herbs which have been shown to be beneficial for varicose veins—butter’s broom and horse chestnut. Butter’s broom tightens and tones blood vessels and is highly valued for its ability to relieve leg pains, cramps and heaviness. Horse chestnut has been researched in Europe and is now widely used to tone veins and improve circulation in the legs. Vari-Gone also contains bioflavonoids (such as rutin and hesperidin) and ascorbic acid which improve the elasticity and tone of veins. Best results are obtained when the formula is taken internally in capsules and applied topically with the cream at the same time.

Another very effective natural therapy for varicose veins is the combination of butter’s broom and Mega Chel. Mega Chel is an oral chelation product that greatly enhances circulation and vascular tone. When taken with butter’s broom, it improves circulation to the extremities and restores elasticity and tone to blood vessels. This program is especially helpful in the elderly who have impaired circulation in the extremities (cold hands and feet, ulcerations, etc.).

White oak bark is another remedy which has a long history of use as a remedy for varicose veins and hemorrhoids. Although it can be taken internally, it is even more effective when applied topically. Make a tea from the bark and apply it as a compress or fomentation over affected areas to tighten and tone veins.

For additional information on dealing with varicose veins consult your local herb specialist or *The Comprehensive Guide to Nature’s Sunshine Products*.

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