

COASTAL VASCULAR & VEIN CENTER



Best Vascular and Vein Center

THE HIDDEN HIGHWAY:

Vein Health and When to See a Specialist

By Anne Toole

Most of us rarely give our vein health much thought until they start making themselves known. Those intricate blue lines beneath our skin are more than just biological scenery. Healthy veins, critical highways in our circulatory system, transport blood back to the heart. When they start to falter, the consequences can be real, not just for comfort but for

your overall health. So when do those squiggly lines and daily leg aches become more than cosmetic concerns? And when should you see a vein doctor?

“People often assume varicose veins – or spider veins – are just cosmetic, but they can be signs of deeper issues,” said Sean Hislop, MD, a vascular surgeon with Coastal Vascular & Vein Center. “They become a medical concern when painful or accompa-

nied by other symptoms like swelling, heaviness or aching.”

One telltale sign that your veins may not be doing their job efficiently is that your symptoms typically worsen as you are on your feet throughout the day but improve when your legs are elevated, and the blood can flow more easily back toward your heart.

The most common red flags start subtly: aching legs, a feeling of heaviness and rosy or spidery veins that begin to appear more prominently. However, there are more serious signs that should prompt immediate attention. “If someone notices darkening of the skin below the knees or if wounds begin to form that don’t heal, that’s very concerning,” Dr. Hislop warned. “Those are signs the skin is damaged and at high risk for open sores.” More than superficial problems, these signs are indicators of chronic venous insufficiency, a condition that requires prompt intervention.

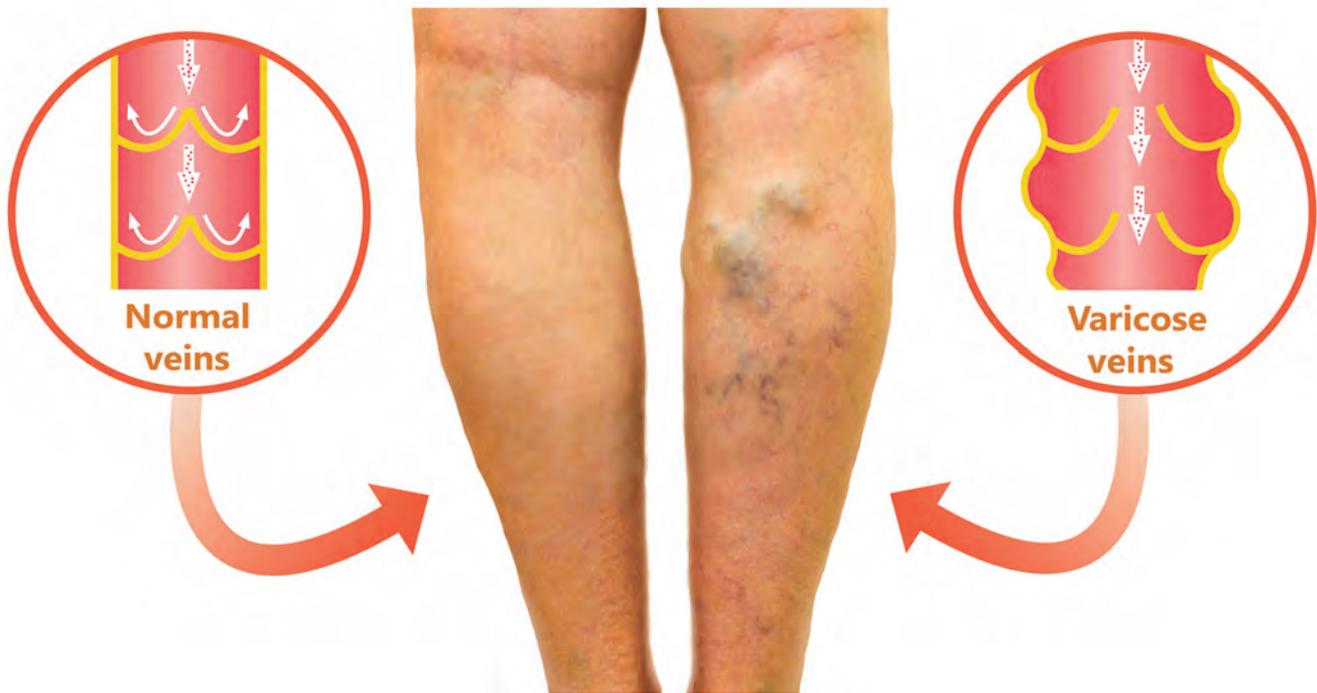
Left untreated, chronic venous insufficiency can lead to more serious complications like venous ulcers, skin infections or even blood clots. The longer the condition progresses, the harder it can be to reverse the damage. Early diagnosis and treatment not only relieve symptoms but also prevent these long-term issues from developing.

Still, some people delay seeking help due to outdated fears about treatment. “People remember years ago when the only solution would be to have veins stripped. Stripping veins was an invasive procedure that carried a lot of risk for complications and which resulted in high pain and significant recovery time,” Dr. Hislop acknowledged. But that procedure has become obsolete; modern vein care is minimally invasive, fast and surprisingly simple.

“Now we shut the vein down with heat, glue or foam. It takes about 10 minutes, it’s done in the office and you walk out afterward. Insurance covers it in most cases,” he said.



Sean Hislop, MD



One of the most compelling changes in vein care has been the improved patient experience. The majority of procedures are typically in the office, and the recovery time is minimal. Most patients are able to return to normal activities the same day. “We invest in the specialized equipment we need for these procedures, so our patients have the highest level of expertise, technology and care in a comfortable environment,” he explained. “We want the best for our patients, and we believe providing them with highly skilled experts and the most advanced technology yields the best outcome.” Efforts like these have made vein treatment more accessible and far less intimidating.

Temporary solutions like compression socks, while helpful, are more of a bandage than a cure. “They alleviate symptoms but don’t fix the underlying problem,” Dr. Hislop said. Staying active, maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding prolonged sitting or standing can help preserve vein health, but, once symptoms appear, it’s best not to wait for conditions to deteriorate.

Even patients with a history of deep vein thrombosis have options, contrary to popular belief. “Many patients think nothing can be done if they’ve had a clot, but that’s not true,” Dr. Hislop explained. “A clot starts like jelly, then hardens over time. Eventually, the body punches holes through it and blood flow resumes. Once that happens, we can safely treat surface veins.”

It’s worth noting that vein issues aren’t just a concern reserved for older adults. Genetics, pregnancy and occupations that require long hours of standing or sitting can all increase your risk, even at a younger age. Women are especially

susceptible due to hormonal changes that affect vein walls during pregnancy or menopause. Paying attention to symptoms early, regardless of your age, can make a big difference in outcomes.

Lifestyle plays a crucial role in vein health, but, once vein disease sets in, lifestyle adjustments alone usually aren’t enough. That’s why regular checkups with a vein specialist can be beneficial, especially if you have a family history or known risk factors. These checkups can help catch problems before they progress and give you access to a range of treatment options.

Your veins work tirelessly to keep your body running smoothly. It’s best to listen and seek help when they start showing signs of distress. With modern treatments and expert care, you don’t have to live with the discomfort or risk of damaged veins. 🕒

Saving Limbs. **Saving Lives.**

At CVVC, our vascular specialists are free to listen more, collaborate more and take on new technologies that others do not have the time or access to provide. We turn to minimally-invasive vascular procedures first. If needed, our experts can also navigate complex surgeries to ensure that you can live your best life.