**Varicose veins**

**Definition**
Varicose veins are abnormally enlarged, superficial veins of the legs that often bulge out of the skin in a tortuous way. The condition of suffering from varicose veins is chronic and progressive and called varicosities. This means that there is no form of treatment that can cure the disease permanently.

**How do varicose veins develop?**
Risk factors: hereditary weakness of connective tissue, age, pregnancies, taking hormone products, overweight, lack of exercise

**Vein valves**
Veins contain valve-like structures that open when the blood flows towards the heart and close when the blood begins to flow in the wrong direction due to gravity. In this way, they enable blood to be transported from the leg veins to the heart.

**Muscle pump**
In addition to the vein valves, the so-called muscle pump plays a major role in the transport of blood from the legs to the heart. The deep veins in the legs are surrounded by muscles that contract and thicken, for example, when walking. This is how they pump the blood in the veins upwards.

**Types of varicose veins**
- Superficial veins
  - Great saphenous vein
  - Small saphenous vein
  - Side branches
  - Superficial epigastric vein
  - Superficial circumflex iliac veins
  - Posterior accessory saphenous vein
  - Anterior accessory saphenous vein
  - External pudendal vein
  - Posterior accessory great saphenous vein (Posterior arch vein)
  - Anterior accessory great saphenous vein (Anterior arch vein)
- Connecting veins
  - Saphenofemoral junction (junction of the great saphenous vein)
  - Saphenopopliteal junction (junction of the small saphenous vein)
- Perforating veins
  - Deep venous system
  - Anterior tibial veins
  - Posterior tibial veins
  - Peroneal veins
  - Popliteal vein
  - Femoral vein
  - Deep femoral vein

**Complications related to untreated varicose veins**
If varicose veins remain untreated for a long time, the following, sometimes serious complications can occur:
- Inflammation of the veins (thrombophlebitis)
- Accumulation of fluid in the legs (oedema)
- Skin discoloration (pigmentation)

**Conservative treatment**
Conservative treatments cannot remove varicose veins, but may relieve the symptoms they cause.

**Medicinal products for oral use**
Agents to treat varicose veins include mild-acting medicines to reduce the symptoms they cause.

**Compression**
Wearing compression bandages or stockings supports the muscle pump and, on regular use, reduces the symptoms caused by varicose veins. Compression after varicose vein treatment can also improve the results of the therapy.

**Sclerotherapy**
Sclerotherapy is an outpatient, virtually painless and minimally invasive therapy to remove spider veins and larger varicose veins. Using a fine needle, the sclerosing agent is injected directly into the diseased vein as a liquid or foam. The body’s own reactions lead to closure of the vein, which is then broken down and disappears completely over time.

**Micro-sclerotherapy**
In the case of spider veins and other small varicose veins, sclerotherapy using a liquid sclerosing agent is known as micro-sclerotherapy. According to the European Guideline, it is the method of choice in these cases.

**Foam sclerotherapy**
Foam sclerotherapy is especially suitable for larger varicose veins such as side branches and saphenous veins, because foam is even more effective. The functional result obtained with foam sclerotherapy corresponds to that of the surgical removal of a varicose vein.

**Beautiful healthy legs**