

# SPIDER VEINS

## on the legs and face

By Daniel R Gorin, MD, RVT, FACS

### What are spider veins?

Spider veins, otherwise known as telangiectasias in the medical field, are small blood vessels near the surface of the skin that become dilated and enlarged. They can form clusters resembling a spider web, thus its name, or can be linear strands. They generally are 1 mm to 2 mm in diameter and are usually red or blue in color. They can be seen on the legs and/or face. They are very common.

### What causes spider veins?

Spider veins are caused by an increased pressure in the veins near the surface of the skin. Doctors do not know exactly why people get them, but heredity and hormones seem to play a major role. Crossing your legs does not cause them.

### Do both men and women suffer from spider veins?

Spider veins occur in both men and women and increase in number as you get older.

### Are there any symptoms associated with spider veins?

Because of their small size and superficial location, spider veins rarely cause any symptoms. Those people with an underlying vein disease may have swelling, a feeling of heaviness, achiness, itchiness and/or fatigue in the legs or feel restless leg type symptoms.

### Do spider veins cause any medical problems?

Spider veins do not usually cause long-term medical problems and are generally considered cosmetic. However, some people with spider veins have an underlying vein disorder that could cause medical problems. Before treatment, have your veins evaluated by a vein specialist to rule out more significant disease.

### Office-based treatment options

*Sclerotherapy.* This is the gold standard for spider vein treatment in the legs. A tiny needle is used, smaller than an insulin needle, to inject the veins with a scleroscent medication. The medication causes the veins to fibrose or scar closed, which ultimately stops blood flow, and the veins fade and/or disappear with little to no discomfort. Several treatments are often required for the desired result. There is no down time for this so you can immediately return to work.

*Radiofrequency ablation using technology such as the VeinGogh or Veinwave.* This treatment works best for facial veins and is not generally helpful with leg veins. This technology uses thermo-coagulation to ablate the vein walls and cause them to disappear. The process uses microbursts of high frequency electrical energy, delivered into the vein using a using a hair fine, insulated needle that does not damage or effect the surrounding skin. It can be used on all skin types. There may be some mild localized redness for a very short period of time, but there is no down

time with this so you can immediately return to work.

*Laser.* Some providers use laser, but it seems to have limited utility with treatment of the leg veins. This technology uses light energy to destroy spider veins. There can be localized redness, itching and swelling at the treatment site, which can last up to a few days. Other possible side effects include prolonged redness, bruising, peeling, rash, lightening or darkening of skin color. It is okay to return to work after treatment if one desires.

### Can spider veins be prevented?

Spider veins cannot always be prevented, but there are some things you can do to improve your overall blood vessel health. Try to keep your weight down to avoid extra pressure on your legs. Walk around or stretch if you have been sitting or standing for a long period of time. Elevate your legs when they are tired or you have swelling - "toes above the nose." Use sunscreen, even during the winter, especially on your face. Limit your exposure to smoke. Exercise regularly. Have your varicose veins treated by a vascular specialist to reduce the pressure in your legs. +



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### Upcoming South Shore Locavores programs

Live & Learn

The Kingston Public Library and edible South Shore & South Coast magazine are gearing up for another South Shore Locavores program. On December 18, the program will focus on The ABCs of Bees, with beekeeper Joe Sybertz. The event will be held at 7 p.m. at the Beal House, 222 Main Street, Kingston. The South Shore Locavores series - a collaboration between the Kingston Public Library and edible South Shore & South Coast magazine - looks at the phenomenon of eating locally.