



# Common Vascular Problems in Primary Care

## Varicose Veins

### General information:

Superficial vein problems, including **spider veins** (telangiectasias) and larger **varicose veins** are common. Risk factors include family history, pregnancy, hormonal changes, excessive standing, weight gain, and aging. Associated symptoms may include aching pain, burning, swelling, itching, unsightly cosmetic appearance, skin pigmentation, and ulcers.

### Diagnostic tests to consider:

- None generally required.

### Primary care management:

- Elastic compression stockings (prescription stockings—knee-high often suffice, but thigh-high or other styles may be considered; 20-30 mm Hg for most varicose veins, 30-40 mm Hg compression for moderate to severe symptoms or varicose veins associated with skin changes or ulceration).
- Exercise (walking, swimming).
- Elevation.
- Weight loss.

### Indications for referral:

- Significant symptoms despite appropriate non-surgical treatment.

Vascular Surgery consultation provides information about treatment options. Varicose veins may be treated with a variety of techniques, including ambulatory phlebectomy, stripping, sclerotherapy, or endovenous ablation with RF current or a laser. Evaluation in the Vascular Surgery clinic includes a thorough assessment of the venous disease and its effects, duplex ultrasound evaluation for venous obstruction and localization of valvular dysfunction and a discussion of treatment options.

Surgical treatment may offer benefits to patients with recurrent superficial phlebitis, bleeding from a prominent varicosity, skin changes, or wounds due to superficial venous insufficiency.

### Indications for urgent referral:

Varicose veins are not a medical emergency, but some complications may require prompt evaluation

### Primary care follow-up and surveillance:

Varicose veins are common and most patients will not seek or require specialty services or interventions. The risk of venous thromboembolism associated with isolated superficial vein disease is negligible. Monitor for new problems or complications.