

Chronic Venous Insufficiency

Valves in leg veins direct the flow of blood back to the heart. When vein valves fail, are damaged, or are blocked by clots, pooling of blood in the legs can occur. This is called chronic venous insufficiency. Symptoms associated with chronic venous insufficiency include heaviness, tiredness, aching, burning, itching, throbbing, or cramping of the legs. Examination of the lower legs may reveal:

- **Edema** – buildup of fluid
- **Varicose veins** – enlarged, thickened vessels
- **Stasis dermatitis** – skin redness and inflammation
- **Venous eczema** – dry, flaking skin
- **Hyperpigmentation** – brownish skin discoloration
- **Lipodermatosclerosis** – scarring of the skin and fat layer
- **Venous stasis ulcers** – crater-like sores around the ankles that can be difficult to heal

Today, newer and less invasive treatments are available to treat chronic venous insufficiency. Treatments include compression stockings, surgery, and other procedures that may help improve venous function, relieve symptoms, and prevent venous ulcerations.

Complex Venous Problems

Some venous diseases are more complex. These include advanced clotting problems, severe chronic venous insufficiency, venous stasis ulcers, venous thoracic outlet syndrome, congenital venous malformations, and vein tumors. The UAB Vein Program is experienced, knowledgeable, and equipped to treat all vein problems.

Learn More About the UAB Vein Program

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 205-996-8346 or visit our website at uabmedicine.org/vein.

UAB VEIN PROGRAM
**Division of Vascular Surgery
and Endovascular Therapy**
UAB Hospital-Highlands
1201 11th Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35205-3410
205-996-VEIN (8346)
uabmedicine.org/vein

EXPERT CARE FOR THE HEALTH OF YOUR VEINS



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Varicose and Spider Veins

Varicose and spider veins occur when blood returning to the heart pools inside a vein, causing congestion and enlargement of the vein. Varicose veins are swollen, dark purple or blue, and often look like large ropes or a cluster of grapes. Spider veins are small, threadlike veins that resemble a spider web and lie close to the skin. In many cases, varicose and spider veins cause no problems but look unattractive. However, they can become painful and cause symptoms such as aching, burning, itching, or throbbing in the veins. They also can lead to heaviness, tiredness, cramping, or swelling in the leg.

A thorough exam of the legs and ultrasound are used to diagnose varicose veins, spider veins, and deeper vein problems. There are many effective outpatient treatments for these vein conditions.

Possible treatments for varicose and spider veins include:

- **Sclerotherapy** – injecting medication into small spider veins
- **Thermocoagulation** – applying heat to small spider veins
- **Phlebectomy** – removing larger varicose veins through tiny incisions
- **Endovenous laser ablation** – applying heat to larger leg veins
- **Chemical ablation** – injecting medications into large varicose veins and/or deeper leg veins
- **Transilluminated powered phlebectomy** – removing large varicose vein clusters with special lighted tools

For more severe varicose vein problems, inpatient surgical options are also available. Evaluation by a provider who specializes in vein surgery can determine which of these options is right for you.

Comprehensive Vein Care, from the UAB Vein Program

Offering comprehensive evaluations, specialized treatments, and compassionate care for your veins

More than 80 million Americans suffer from some form of venous disease, from spider and varicose veins to venous thromboembolism, chronic venous insufficiency, and more complex vein problems. Some people aren't even aware that such conditions exist, and others are reluctant to seek treatment for fear that it would be difficult, invasive, and painful.

The UAB Vein Program and the UAB Vein Clinic offer convenient and comprehensive care, provided by specialists in vein disease. Through both outpatient and inpatient treatments, patients have access to the full range of new and less invasive procedures that are less painful and allow patients to heal faster.

This brochure explains more about the problems that could affect your veins and the treatment options available through the UAB Vein Program.



Deep Vein Thrombosis/ Pulmonary Embolism

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that develops in a deep vein, usually in the lower leg. When DVT is not diagnosed and treated, the clot can break loose and travel to the lungs, causing a pulmonary embolism (PE). A simple ultrasound can diagnose DVT, and effective treatment can greatly reduce the risk of fatal PE.

Greater awareness of risk factors and prevention are the best treatments. Risk factors that can increase the risk of DVT/PE include advanced age, family history, prior clotting episodes, hormonal changes, malignancy, obesity, prolonged immobility, travel, serious injury, surgery, and hospitalizations.

Possible treatments for DVT/PE include:

- **Anticoagulation drugs** – medications to help prevent blood clots and slow their growth
- **Thrombolytic therapy** – medications to dissolve clots
- **Thrombectomy** – surgical clot removal
- **Vena cava filter** – placement of a filter to prevent clots from traveling to the lungs