

## Vein disease:

### Your personal prevention programme

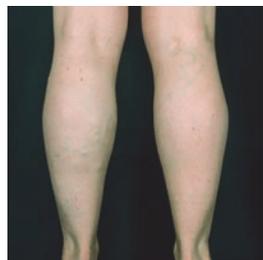
While your arteries transport blood containing oxygen and nutrients to the body cells, the veins are responsible for taking 'used' blood via the heart back to the lungs, where it can be enriched with fresh oxygen.

In order for blood to be returned to the heart against the force of gravity, the vein valves must close tightly and the tissue which surrounds the veins must be strong. Otherwise the veins expand and become varicose. There's a danger of thromboses, emboli and so-called 'open leg' ulcers.

### Self-diagnosis



Spider-bursts (left) and reticular veins (right) are changes in the blood vessels which can be early signs of vein disease.



Varicose veins (left and right) should be treated, if necessary surgically, as soon as possible.



Deep vein thrombosis (left) is highly dangerous: You must seek treatment immediately! If you have vasculitis (inflammation of the vein wall - right) you should also visit a doctor or specialist clinic without delay.

The classic symptoms of vein disease are swollen legs, pins and needles and feelings of tension in the calves, foot and calf cramps, legs which feel heavy or tired in the evening. Standing the whole day or frequent flying put a special burden on the vein system of the legs.

### **These things are good for your veins:**

- Take frequent long walks as this exercises the leg and foot musculature.
- Sports involving sustained activity, such as hiking, swimming, jogging, skiing, dancing, cycling and gymnastics, are especially recommended.
- Whenever you are involved in an activity which involves sitting or standing, take every opportunity which presents itself to walk around.
- Don't wear socks or stockings with tight elastic.
- Choose light, comfortable shoes with flat heels.
- Sleep with your feet slightly raised.
- Lose any excess weight and include plenty of fibre in your diet.
- Limit your alcohol consumption, since alcohol expands the veins.
- Don't smoke, as smoking makes you more vulnerable to vasculitis and thromboses. Women who both smoke and take contraceptive pills are especially at risk.
- Gentle cold-water treatments (*Kneipp* cures) involving treading water and hot and cold knee and thigh washes are an effective way to treat and prevent vein disease. However, you should avoid cold wraps on cold legs, draughts and more than three treatments a day. Remember always to warm up your legs again after cold water treatment.
- The wearing of compression stockings continues to be a valuable tip for improving circulation in the veins. It also serves as an effective way to prevent thrombosis (and vasculitis) during long car and plane journeys.

### **Vein gymnastics**

Vein gymnastics promote the flow of blood back to the heart, relieve the veins and ease symptoms.

#### First exercise:

- 1) Lie on your back with your legs stretched out and your hands behind your head.
- 2) Bend your right knee towards your chest.
- 3) Stretch your right leg slowly upwards
- 4) Lower your right leg slowly, keeping it stretched.
- 5) Repeat this exercise 15 to 20 times for each leg.

#### Second exercise:

- 1) Lie down on your back with your legs in a raised position.
- 2) Clench your toes as quickly and tightly as possible and then stretch them out again. Repeat this for 30 seconds.
- 3) Roll alternate feet inwards and outwards eight times successively.
- 4) Raise the ends of alternate feet and stretch them out again. Do this at a rapid pace for 30 seconds.