

Prevention

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How to Prevent Spider Veins, According to Ders

There are a few steps you can take.

BY KORIN MILLER PUBLISHED: MAR 17, 2023

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SAVE ARTICLE



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No one's skin is perfect, and nearly everyone deals with things like discoloration, scars, and spider veins at some point. But if developing spider veins isn't on your to-do list, it's understandable to find yourself searching for things like "how to prevent spider veins" to do what you can to lower your risk of this condition.

It's important to note that spider veins are common, are usually painless, and don't cause any health issues, per the U.S. Office on Women's Health (OASH). So, if you happen to develop them, it doesn't mean that that your health will be impacted in any way.

Some people are also at a higher risk of developing spider veins, simply because of their genetics, according to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD)—meaning, spider veins may simply be in your DNA and there's only so much you can do about them.

All of that said, doctors say there are steps you can take to lower your risk of developing spider veins and maybe even prevent them. It's also good to know that there are things you can take to treat spider veins if you happen to develop them.

Again, if you have spider veins and aren't bothered by them, or don't really care if you develop spider veins in the future, just keep on doing you. But if you want to lower the risk spider veins will be in your future, here's what you need to know.

What are spider veins?

Spider veins, aka thread veins, are twisted veins that are usually red but may appear blue or purple, OASH says. They are smaller than varicose veins, but similar, and may look like tree branches or spider webs.

These veins are “visible just beneath the surface of the skin,” says board-certified dermatologist Ife J. Rodney, M.D., founding director of Eternal Dermatology Aesthetics and professor of dermatology at Howard University and George Washington University. “While spider veins are usually not harmful, they can be a cosmetic concern for some people,” she adds.

Spider veins are superficial blood vessels that are caused by larger deep veins that have valves within them that are damaged, allowing blood to flow backward, explains Susan Massick, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

“These are generally harmless—they are more of a cosmetic concern than a health concern,” says New York-based dermatologist **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**

Where do spider veins usually show up?

Spider veins most commonly show up on the legs or face, OASH says. However, you can technically get them anywhere.

What causes spider veins?

There are a few possible reasons why someone may develop spider veins.

“We don’t understand why, but some people are genetically predisposed to develop spider veins,” says Joshua Zeichner, M.D., director of cosmetic and clinical research at The Mount Sinai Hospital. “We see them more commonly in people who have fair skin, and then those who have more UV light exposure and sun damage.”

They’re also more common during high states of estrogen, like during pregnancy, Dr. Zeichner says.

“Your daily routine can play a major role, especially with prolonged sitting or prolonged standing,” Dr. Massick says. “It is common in teachers or healthcare workers who stand for extended periods of the day.” Having obesity, hormonal changes, or being on certain medications may also raise your risk of developing spider veins, she says.

Ultimately, though, “the biggest factor is genetics—if an immediate family member has spider veins, your risk is higher,” Dr. Rodney says.

How to prevent spider veins

You can’t change your genetics, but there are a few things you can do to lower the risk you’ll develop spider veins. Dr. Rodney recommends doing the following:

- Stay active and try to maintain a healthy weight
- Avoid sitting or standing in one position for too long
- Wear compression stockings or socks
- Protect your skin from the sun
- Avoid tight clothing that restricts blood flow

Dr. Goldenberg says he recommends that his patients who are concerned about spider veins wear support stockings or socks during pregnancy and exercise—it’s just not a perfect solution. “Compression can help prevent spider veins, but is usually not 100% [effective],” he says.

Spider vein treatment options

If you have spider veins and they bother you, there are a few potential treatment options to consider.

One is a procedure known as sclerotherapy. With sclerotherapy, your dermatologist injects a chemical into the spider vein that irritates the wall of the vein, the AAD explains. A compression stocking is placed on each leg, and you'll be encouraged to continue to wear them for two to three weeks along with taking daily walks. The treatment causes the walls of the veins to stick together and improves circulation. Spider veins will usually disappear in three to six weeks after sclerotherapy, although you may need two or three treatments, the AAD says.

Laser therapy is another option. During laser treatment, "a beam of light is directed at the affected veins, causing them to fade," Dr. Rodney says. Some veins disappear immediately after treatment; Others may take up to three months, and more than one treatment may be needed, the AAD says.

A newer treatment called endovenous laser therapy (EVLT) may be used, according to the AAD. (With EVLT, a laser fiber is inserted into the vein and heated, causing it to collapse, the AAD says.) However, one of our professionals shares that it is more commonly used to treat varicose veins.

When to see a doctor for spider veins

If you happen to notice spider veins and they don't bother you, there's no need to do anything. "Spider veins are quite harmless and do not require treatment," Dr. Massick says. "If their appearance bothers you, however, you can see a board-certified dermatologist, plastic, or vascular surgeon to help treat these areas."

It's also a good idea to seek care if you experience symptoms like pain, swelling, leg fatigue, or sudden swelling or redness with pain or discomfort—those can be signs of a blood clot, Dr. Massick points out.

Ultimately, it's best to talk to your doctor on this one.

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With more than a decade of experience, board-certified dermatologist Caroline Chang, M.D. is nationally recognized as a top doctor in both medical and cosmetic dermatology. She is also the founder of Rhode Island Dermatology Institute, the state's first direct care dermatology practice with the goal of providing high-quality, customized care.