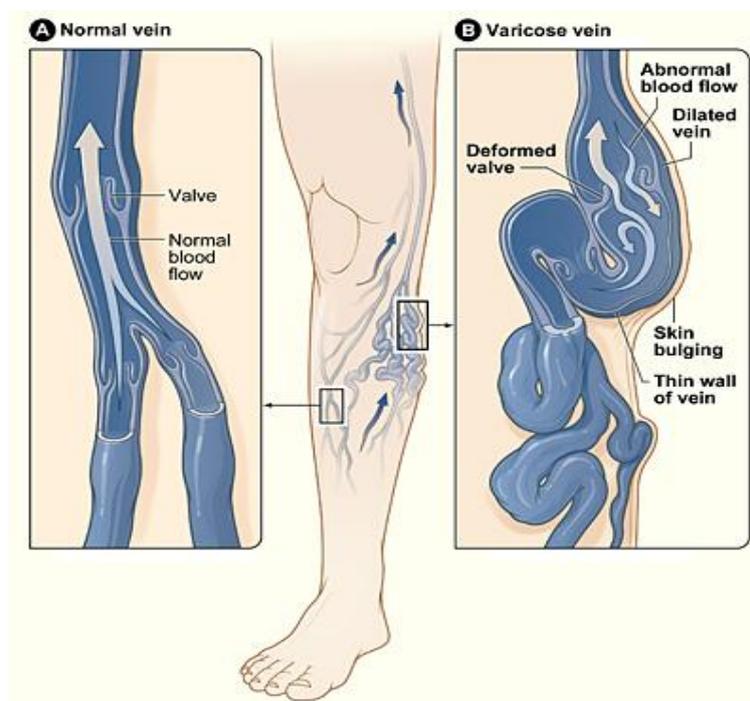


Varicose veins surgery

Veins carry deoxygenated blood back to the heart. Varicose veins are knobby, twisted and darkish-blue in appearance, and are most commonly found on the legs.

Blood is collected in the superficial veins of the leg, just below the skin surface, and delivered to deeper veins that run within the calf muscles. The muscular action of the calves helps to pump the blood against the force of gravity towards the heart.



One-way valves inside the veins prevent blood from travelling backwards. If these valves fail to close properly, blood pools in the superficial veins. Over time, the affected veins distend with blood (become 'varicose'). The cause is unknown. Varicose vein surgery is the removal of these distended veins. Treatment can be undergone for therapeutic or cosmetic reasons.

Surgical techniques:

Major surface veins (long or short saphenous veins) that are varicose are usually treated surgically. Generally, numerous small incisions are used to access the vein, rather than one large cut. Depending on the location of the varicose vein, the incisions may, for example, be in the groin or behind the knee.

Surgical techniques include:

- **Ligation and stripping:**
The vein is cut and tied off (ligation). Stripping the vein involves inserting a slender instrument into the vein through a small incision. The vein is then pulled out through a second incision.
- **Phlebectomy:**
Small incisions are made, and the veins removed with a special hook.

Immediately after the operation:

After the operation, you can expect:

- Firm bandaging on the legs, to reduce bruising for at least 10 days;
- Pain-killing medication;
- You will be encouraged to walk around
- Hospitals stay of one or two days.

Common side effects of surgery:

Some of the common side effects of varicose vein surgery include:

- Swelling, which may take a few weeks to subside. The feet and ankles are particularly prone;
- Scarring, although scars tend to be less noticeable than varicose veins and fade with time;
- Brown staining of the skin may occur, but tends to fade with time;
- The skin and calf muscle may be painful, swollen and bruised;
- Unintentional injuries to nerves may cause patches of numbness or 'pins and needles';
- These patches may recover in time (up to two years in some cases) or they may be permanent.

Possible complications following surgery:

Varicose vein surgery is considered to be safe, but all surgery carries some degree of risk. Possible complications may include:

- Infection, particularly if skin ulcers were present;
- Blood clots forming within deep veins;
- Bleeding or bruising.



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ECS/Sept '11