Venous Disease

What is Venous Disease?

Venous disease is a term used for conditions that occur when your leg veins have a problem sending blood back to your heart. This can cause blood to collect (pool) in your legs. Venous disease conditions include:

- Spider veins (swollen veins, close to the skin, that sometimes look like cords)
- Varicose veins (swollen veins, close to the skin, that sometimes look like cords)
- Deep vein thrombosis (blood clot in the deep veins of the body)
- Chronic venous insufficiency (weak or damaged valves in the veins of the legs)
- Thrombophlebitis (blood clot in the surface veins of the body)
- Pulmonary embolism (a blood clot in the veins of the lungs)
- May-Thurner syndrome (an anatomical abnormality that causes left leg blood clots, pain or swelling)
- Inferior Vena Cava Abnormalities (can cause swelling, pain and blood clots)

What are the symptoms of venous disease?

You may notice these in your legs:

- Swelling or heaviness, especially in the lower leg and ankle
- Painful leg cramps or muscle spasms
- Tight feeling in your calves or itchy, painful legs
- Varicose Veins (twisted, enlarged veins close to the surface of the skin)
- Brown-colored skin, often near the ankles

What are the causes of venous disease?

When you are in a sitting position, the blood in your veins has to travel upwards, against gravity. Your veins carry blood through a series of valves that open to push blood up toward the heart. When these valves become damaged or weakened, blood flows downward and pools in your veins, resulting in a variety of symptoms.

Risk factors that contribute to venous disease include:

- Family history of venous disease
- History of blood clots
- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Prolonged periods of sitting or standing

How is venous disease diagnosed?

At your clinic appointment, your doctor will ask you about your health and current symptoms. He/she will also perform a physical examination on you. After the doctor reviews your information and completes the examination, he/she may decide you need testing to check the blood flow in your legs.

The following tests can be used to diagnose venous disease:

- **CT scan** (computed tomography scan, also called CAT scan) – An imaging procedure that uses X-rays and computer technology to produce cross-sectional, detailed images of the body, including bones, muscles, fat and organs
- **Duplex ultrasound** – A painless, noninvasive test that shows how blood is moving through your arteries and veins. It examines the structure of your blood vessels and shows if there are any blockages in your arteries.
- **MRI** (magnetic resonance imaging) – A noninvasive, sophisticated imaging procedure that uses large magnets and a computer to produce detailed images of organs and structures inside your body

How is venous disease treated?

Treatment of venous disease depends on the type and severity of your condition. Your doctor will discuss which treatment option is best for you.

Some common treatments for venous disease include:

- Medication
- Exercise
- Compression stockings
- Medical procedures
- Surgery