



For Immediate Release

The Vein Healthcare Center Offers Health Tips for a Happy Heart (and Legs)

February 12, 2013 (South Portland, ME) – For twenty-four hours a day, the human circulatory system is continuously moving oxygen-rich blood to every cell in the body. While the arterial side of the system is well understood, we are still learning about many issues within the venous system. According to [Dr. Cindy Asbjornsen](#), founder of the [Vein Healthcare Center](#), the veins contain approximately 70 percent of the body's total blood volume when a person is at rest.

"Healthy veins carry blood from all extremities back to your heart, but when veins are compromised, it can affect your overall health and well-being," said Dr. Asbjornsen.

Here's a quick review of how the human heart works:

The major parts of the circulatory system (also known as the cardiovascular system) are the heart, arteries and veins. Simply put, the heart pumps blood to the arteries, which take the oxygenated blood to all parts of the body. The veins take deoxygenated blood back up to the heart, where it is pumped directly to the lungs. In the lungs, carbon dioxide is replaced by oxygen, the renewed blood flows back to the heart, and the whole process begins again.

In the leg veins, blood is usually traveling against gravity, thus the *valves* in the leg veins perform an important function. Venous insufficiency, or [vein disease](#), occurs if the valves in the veins become damaged and allow the backward flow of blood in the legs. This pooling of blood can lead to a feeling of heaviness and can cause skin changes such as "spider veins," or a brown, woody appearance to the lower leg. Left untreated, it can lead to leg pain, swelling and serious health problems.

Venous disease is one of the most [common health conditions](#) in the United States. Many people have visible varicose veins, while others have no visible signs of the disease. It can affect men and women of all ages and activity levels, and while it has a strong genetic component, venous disease can be aggravated by environmental risks and other factors.

Modern vein treatments are outpatient procedures that are minimally invasive and virtually pain-free. But there are also things one can do before seeing a doctor. Here are some tips to alleviate discomfort and help prevent the progression of symptoms:

- Walk. Walking causes the rhythmic contraction of calf muscles and helps promote blood flow to the heart. Walk at least 30 minutes every day – all at once, or in shorter increments.

- Elevate. Elevating your legs above your heart as often as possible— for as long as 30 minutes, or as briefly as three minutes. The best time is after you have been standing or after a hot shower.
- Don't smoke. Smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke constricts veins and affects overall circulation.
- Sit properly. Focus on good posture and avoid crossing your legs, or sitting in ways that can compress veins for prolonged periods.
- See a qualified, [board-certified phlebologist](#) for a screening and evaluation.

Dr. Cindy Asbjornsen is the founder of the Vein Healthcare Center, as well as the Maine Phlebology Association. Certified by the American Board of Phlebology, she cares for all levels of venous disease, including spider veins, varicose veins and venous ulcers. Dr. Asbjornsen is the only vein specialist in Maine to be named a Fellow by the American College of Phlebology. She is also the editorial director of Vein Health News, Maine's vein magazine for primary care physicians.

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