

Varicose veins keep some in long pants all year

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An expert discusses risk factors and treatments.

(HealthDay) -- Varicose veins are a cosmetic issue for most people, but they can be a sign of a serious medical problem for others, an expert says.

"Twenty to 25 percent of Americans have varicose veins, and about 6 percent have more advanced venous disease including skin changes or, occasionally, ulcerations," Dr. Peter Gloviczki, a [vascular surgeon](#) at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., said in a clinic news release.

"Evaluation of varicose veins with ultrasound is an easy and accurate way to assess the need for treatment. New, minimally [invasive therapy](#) is available today that is effective and is performed as outpatient treatment," said Gloviczki, who helped develop national guidelines for the treatment of varicose veins for the Society for Vascular Surgery and American Venous Forum.

Varicose veins typically appear in the legs, ankles and feet. People more likely to develop them include [older adults](#), pregnant women, obese people, and those who sit or stand for long periods of time or who have a family history of varicose veins.

In some people, varicose veins can lead to more serious problems such as swollen legs, skin changes, bleeding, blood clots and ulcers, according to Gloviczki.

Exercise, weight loss and elevating the legs can reduce pain and prevent varicose veins from worsening, he said. Compression stockings that squeeze the legs and improve blood flow often are recommended before doctors opt for [medical procedures](#).

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more about [varicose veins](#).

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