

➤ PAT HENRY

VARICOSE VEINS — A GROWING ISSUE

UNSIGHTLY AND PAINFUL VEINS NOW
BENEFIT FROM HI-TECH TREATMENTS

ONE thing I have noticed among clients is a visible increase in varicose veins, particularly around the calf area and on the inner thigh. This could be down to the decrease in body fat which makes the veins more prominent. Low body fat levels for both men and women is the new look but personally I find that low body fat on women is not a healthy or attractive look — particularly if your veins on your arms and legs are pumping out, look at Madonna (below).

SPORTS AND VARICOSE VEINS

Varicose veins are big fat veins and they are usually seen on the legs and calfs. In any busy gym there are always a few people with visible veins. I was interested to find out what the relationship that these veins had to training, and what effect they had on individual performance.

I spoke to Prof Austin Leahy of Vein Clinics of Ireland, an authority on varicose veins and their treatment. Firstly he explained that varicose veins are very common and in the age group using gyms, they occur in 30pc of women and 20pc of men.

There has always been a suspicion that occupations involving standing, such as barmen, are more likely to have varicose

veins but there is no evidence for this. Training which keeps people thin is more likely to prevent varicose veins by avoiding obesity. That being said there is a strong inherited factor in varicose veins.

ELASTIC

Secondly, varicose veins can cause tiredness in the legs and dull aching pain after exercise. People with varicose veins should use elastic stockings to the knee during exercise in order to prevent these symptoms.

This also prevents the veins from getting worse.

A lot of research has been performed on distance runners. Tests show that calf compression with elastic stockings reduces fatigue and improves recovery.

So going to the gym is not going to give you varicose veins, but it may make your varicose veins more obvious. Patients with varicose veins should definitely wear elastic stockings in the gym. In fact endurance athletes will benefit from elastic stockings even if they don't have varicose veins.

TREATMENT OF VARICOSE VEINS

The good news for varicose vein sufferers is that there has been a revolution in their treatment. Prof Leahy explained: "We no longer do open surgery under general anaesthetic for varicose veins. There is no cutting, stripping or sewing."

New techniques mean that patients can have a walk-in, walk-out VNUS Closure Procedure procedure using ultrasound. The modern techniques mean less pain, less bruising and speedy return to full activities. Less severe varicose veins can be managed by injection or laser treatment which don't even require temporary hospital admission.

THERE IS NO
EVIDENCE THAT
OCCUPATIONS
INVOLVING
STANDING CAN
LEAD TO
VARICOSE VEINS

