

UAB's Vein Program

From unsightly spider veins to life-threatening illness, UAB's Vein Program treats them all

By Virginia Crittenden

Venous disease, which can range from uncomfortable or unsightly conditions to life-threatening illnesses, affects close to 1 million people in Alabama. "Despite that, vein disease is often overlooked or under-diagnosed," says Marc Passman, M.D., a UAB vascular surgeon and director of the new UAB Vein Program.

To solve this problem, UAB has brought together treatment for a wide spectrum of venous conditions through the UAB Vein Program, which combines outpatient care at the UAB Vein Clinic with more intensive treatment at UAB Hospital. "It's the only program of its kind in the state, designed to take care of a wide range of venous problems that were previously underserved in this region," Dr. Passman explains.

Outpatient Treatment at The UAB Vein Clinic

The UAB Vein Clinic offers the latest minimally invasive techniques to treat varicose and spider veins. Varicose and spider veins result when blood returning to the heart pools inside a vein, causing congestion and enlargement of the vein. Typically, varicose veins are swollen, dark purple or blue and look like large ropes or a cluster of grapes. Spider veins are small, thread-like veins close to the skin's surface. These conditions can be unsightly and may cause leg cramps and swelling.

For some people, untreated varicose veins can even result in skin ulcers and blood clots requiring intensive medical care. In addition, people with varicose veins are often at risk for other venous diseases. That's why UAB's Vein Clinic also offers evaluations to determine if patients are at risk for more serious venous disease.

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UAB Vein Program physicians are uniquely experienced to care for venous disease with the most appropriate treatments.

Risk Factors for DVT or Embolism

- ▶ Prolonged sitting, bedrest or travel
- ▶ Advanced age
- ▶ Hypertension
- ▶ Smoking
- ▶ Complex surgery
- ▶ Lower body trauma
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Hormonal changes or hormone therapy
- ▶ Heart attack, stroke or congestive heart failure
- ▶ Family history
- ▶ Rare coagulation disorders

UAB vascular surgeon Marc Passman, M.D., and other physicians at the UAB Vein Clinic emphasize that patients should know their risk factors for venous disease and seek medical attention if they are experiencing symptoms or have concerns regarding risk factors. Whether you have spider veins, varicose veins or need an evaluation for potentially serious venous disease, the UAB Vein Program is the place to turn for expert, compassionate care.

Currently located at The Kirklin Clinic®, the UAB Vein Clinic is scheduled to open at UAB Highlands in the Spring of 2008.

For information, call UAB HealthFinder at **(205) 934-9999** or **1-800-UAB-8816** or visit uabhealth.org/vein.

Most treatments for varicose and spider veins have few side effects and minimal scarring and can be performed on an outpatient basis at the UAB Vein Clinic.

Treatment for More Serious Venous Disease

Venous diseases are under-diagnosed in the U.S. The UAB Vein Program is designed to diagnose and treat venous disease such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT), pulmonary embolism, venous ulcers and venous insufficiency.

DVT, which primarily affects the veins in the calf and thigh, can result in the formation of a blood clot, or thrombus, in the larger veins. Clots interfere with circulation and can break off and travel through the bloodstream, lodging in the lungs, heart or brain. Emboli are potentially fatal. Often, patients with DVT have no painful symptoms. Prevention is an important component, and DVT risk assessment can be scheduled through the UAB Vein Clinic. For identified DVT, several advanced treatment options for minimally invasive clot removal or prevention of embolization are available.

UAB Vein Program physicians are experienced in treating arterial vascular disease and are uniquely experienced to care for venous disease with the most appropriate treatments, from medical therapies to minimally invasive outpatient procedures to advanced surgical procedures.

Treatments for Vein Health and Beauty

Sclerotherapy: To erase spider veins, a solution is injected into the affected vein, causing it to collapse and fade.

Lasers: Several types of laser treatments are available to minimize or eliminate varicose and spider veins. Endovenous laser ablation is a new, minimally invasive technique that closes off the blood supply to varicose veins and may replace traditional treatments, such as vein stripping.

Minimally invasive surgery: Depending on the diagnosis, several options are available. Phlebectomy removes varicose veins or vein clusters through tiny incisions. The TriVex® system removes large vein clusters through tiny incisions using minimally invasive scopes.

Traditional treatments such as vein stripping are also available where warranted.