



DOC ON THE SPOT

Dr Jocelyn Brookes, Consultant Endovascular Radiologist at The London Clinic answers walkers questions on a sore point – varicose veins.

CW: What are varicose veins?
DrJB: “Unsightly bulging veins caused by increased venous blood pressure in the veins running under the skin.”

CW: Why do we get them?
DrJB: “They occur when the valves in the veins fail to work – allowing blood to flow backwards into the leg veins instead of towards the heart to pick up fresh oxygen. No-one knows exactly why some people get them and others don’t, but roughly 20% of men and women are prone to get them and this is a familial, genetic tendency they inherited from their parents.

CW: Are they dangerous?
DrJB: “No. These faulty veins don’t always bother people, but they can be worsened by anything that increases deep venous pressure such as strenuous exercise, pregnancy or standing for long periods of time.”

CW: Can they be prevented?
DrJB: “You can try wearing external compression stockings when walking and, when possible, sit and elevate the legs if the symptoms of heat, throbbing and heaviness in the legs get too much. Some creams are promoted for varicose veins, such as horse-chestnut oil which can provide some relief from symptoms.”

CW: How are they removed?
DrJB: “Endovenous laser ablation. This means they’re removed without surgery under local anaesthetic (and a little sedation) and the patient can return to walking almost immediately.” *Thanks to www.thelondonclinic.co.uk*

