

Don't let varicose veins be a pain during pregnancy

Changes to the body during pregnancy increase the risk of developing varicose veins. Here, we explain how to stop them from affecting your life through your pregnancy and beyond.

What causes varicose veins in pregnancy?

Several factors, including hormone changes, cause the veins to relax, allowing the pooling of blood and making the veins enlarged and more visible. An increased volume of blood to accommodate the baby puts further strain on the veins, as does the additional weight of the baby as it grows. Once the baby is born, the veins may return to normal but the risk of the veins remaining varicose increases with each pregnancy.

What are the symptoms of varicose veins?

In addition to visible veins in the legs, varicose veins can cause pain and itching. Your legs may feel heavy, achy and uncomfortable,

or could feel like they are burning or throbbing. You might also experience some swelling to your legs and feet.

What can I do to relieve the symptoms?

- Avoid standing for long periods of time but if unavoidable, try to flex your ankles and calves to help blood flow.
- Put your feet up as often as possible, ideally above the level of your heart. Even when sleeping, elevate your legs if possible.
- Wear compression garments, such as socks or tights to support your veins and help to alleviate the symptoms.
- Do gentle exercise to boost circulation, such as swimming, or walking. Even simple stretches and foot exercises can help.▶▶