

Article Link: <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/venous-insufficiency-topic-overview>

## Venous Insufficiency

### Topic Overview

#### What is venous insufficiency?

Venous insufficiency is a problem with the flow of **blood** from the veins of the legs back to the **heart**. It's also called chronic venous insufficiency or chronic venous stasis.

Veins have valves that keep the **blood** moving in one direction-toward the **heart**. In venous insufficiency, the valves in the veins of the leg don't work right. So fluid pools in the legs. This can lead to problems that include **varicose veins**.

#### What causes the problem?

Venous insufficiency is sometimes caused by **deep vein thrombosis** and **high blood pressure** inside leg veins.

You are more likely to have venous insufficiency if you:

- Are older.
- Are female.
- Are **overweight**.
- Don't get enough **physical activity**.
- Smoke.
- Have a family history of **varicose veins**.

#### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms affect the legs and may include:

- Swelling, often in the **ankles**.
- **Varicose veins**.
- **Itching**.
- Cramping.
- **Skin** sores (ulcers).
- Aching or a feeling of heaviness.
- Changes in skin color.

#### How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor can diagnose venous insufficiency by examining your legs and by using a type of **ultrasound** test (duplex Doppler) to find out how well blood is flowing in your legs.

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## How is it treated?

You can wear [compression stockings](#), which are tighter at the ankles than at the top of the legs, to reduce swelling and to relieve pain. They also can help venous skin ulcers heal. You can buy the stockings with or without a prescription.

You also can try to:

- Get more [exercise](#), especially walking. It can increase blood flow.
- Avoid standing or sitting for a long time, which can make the fluid pool in your legs.
- Keep your legs raised above your heart when you're lying down. This reduces swelling.

WebMD Medical Reference from Healthwise



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