

# Newest Techniques Offer Relief and Beautiful Results For Varicose Vein Sufferers

by Leah M. Rank and Sage L. Andrews

According to the American College of Phlebology, approximately 80 million Americans suffer from some sort of venous disorder, and up to 50 percent of American women may be affected by abnormal leg veins. Fortunately, McLeod Health offers many options for relief, including the latest techniques in Endovenous Laser Therapy.

Vein disease of the leg occurs when the veins do not properly return blood from the lower leg to the heart. This is due to a failure of the valves in the veins. Eventually, the blood overfills and causes the veins to enlarge. Two common types of vein disease in the legs are varicose veins and spider veins.

Varicose veins are large and “rope-like,” often a quarter of an inch or larger in size and can grow over time. They occur in clusters or knots winding down the legs, and can be blue, bulged, and twisted.

Spider veins are small red, blue, or purple veins on the surface of the skin. Abnormal leg veins commonly cause burning, heaviness, fatigue, night cramps, pain, restlessness, and complications if not treated. Sufferers may also experience skin changes such as rashes, redness, and sores.

Susan Griffin had suffered from “bulging” varicose veins since she was in college. They were painful and caused her to feel self-conscious about wearing shorts. Finally in 1995, she had the problem veins removed in a procedure called “Surgical Stripping.” This procedure, which used to be the only treatment for large varicose veins, was performed in an operating room under anesthesia, and required an extensive recovery time.

However, the procedure was not a permanent fix. Susan’s varicose veins came back during her pregnancies and stayed, growing worse than before. With time, her legs ached more and more. She was referred to Dr. Edward Lee of Pee Dee Surgical Group in June of 2005, and he recommended that she receive Endovenous Laser Therapy for treating her legs.

“In Endovenous Laser Therapy, a thin laser fiber is inserted into the diseased vein, generally through a small puncture in the leg above where the visual symptoms appear. The physician then delivers energy through the fiber which causes the vein to close as the fiber is gradually removed. Endovenous Laser Therapy can be performed in the physician’s office in less than two hours, and the patient is encouraged to walk immediately following the procedure,” said Dr. Lee.

Susan received this treatment for one leg in September and the other in November. Each procedure lasted only three hours, and she was walking right away. Within six weeks, she could see a drastic improvement. “My legs don’t feel heavy anymore. I have increased confidence, and I can wear shorts,” Susan said.

Depending on the type and stage of vein disease, there are other treatments available in addition to Endovenous Laser Therapy. For treating spider veins, there is Sclerotherapy. This procedure involves injecting a small amount of liquid into the diseased vein, causing the vein to seal and shut and therefore eliminating it. This can be performed in a physician’s office with no anesthesia.



**Surgeon Dr. Ed Lee and Gail Howell, LPN, evaluate the results of Susan Griffin’s Endovenous Laser Therapy treatment.**

Ambulatory Phlebectomy, a new version of Surgical Stripping, involves very small incisions and a hook to remove portions of the veins. Compared to previous methods of Surgical Stripping, this results in less damage to the leg and less post-surgery recovery time.

Varicose and spider veins are commonly hereditary, and can be accelerated by increasing age, obesity, pregnancy, and standing for long periods of time. Vein disease most often occurs in women between 30 and 70 years old. “If it’s not treated, it’s painful. For the men and women of Florence, it’s a wonderful and convenient thing to have here,” Susan added.

For more information about these procedures, please call **Pee Dee Surgical Group at 665-7941.**