



Vein Healthcare Center

For Immediate Release

Dr. Cindy Asbjornsen of the Vein Healthcare Center Offers Tips for Swelling Legs

November 13, 2012 (South Portland, ME) – Swelling of the feet, ankles or legs is a common problem that affects men and women alike. Edema, as it is known in the medical community, is swelling due to a buildup of extra fluid.

According to Dr. Cindy Asbjornsen of the [Vein Healthcare Center in Maine](#), there are many possible causes for edema, including [venous insufficiency](#).

“The treatment of leg edema depends upon a proper diagnosis— and if the swelling is caused by venous insufficiency, there are treatments available,” said Dr. Asbjornsen. “Those who experience leg swelling should visit his or her physician or specialist to determine the cause.”

A variety of tests will likely be given, including an arterial or venous ultrasound test to look for blockages in the leg arteries or faulty valves in the leg veins. If leg swelling is due to venous insufficiency, here are some things to consider:

- Elevate your legs above your heart periodically throughout the day, especially after you have been standing for a long time.
- Wear [graduated compression stockings](#) to help promote the flow of blood back up to the heart. They are available at many pharmacies and medical supply stores.
- Protect the skin over the swollen area from cuts, scrapes or extreme temperatures. The skin becomes more fragile over time and any injuries can take much longer heal.
- Contact a [board certified phlebologist](#) for an evaluation. Minimally invasive office procedures, such as [endovenous laser ablation](#), can fix the underlying problem of venous insufficiency.

Venous insufficiency is defined as the impairment of blood flow towards the heart. The legs are comprised of a network of veins that are similar to branches on a tree: they contain large, or major veins and increasingly smaller veins. Oxygenated blood is constantly being pumped from the heart to the rest of the body through the arteries. Veins then carry deoxygenated blood back to the heart.

Healthy veins have valves, which open and close to assist the return of blood to the heart. Venous insufficiency, also known as venous reflux, occurs if these valves become damaged, allowing the backward flow of blood in the legs. Because gravity works on the legs more than on other parts of the body, these vein walls are under tremendous pressure. When blood cannot be properly returned through the vein, it can pool, leading to a feeling of heaviness and fatigue, and very often, swollen legs.

Chronic swelling also puts people at risk for cellulitis, a potentially serious bacterial infection that can affect the skin's surface and its underlying tissue and cause the skin to become swollen and tender. Those with venous symptoms can also be at increased risk for superficial thrombophlebitis, which are clots within the superficial veins that can be extremely painful.

Dr. Cindy Asbjornsen is the founder of the Maine Phlebology Association and the Vein Healthcare Center in Maine. Dr. Asbjornsen is certified by the American Board of Phlebology and cares for all levels of venous disease, including spider veins, varicose veins and venous stasis ulcers. She is also the Editorial Director of Vein Health News, Maine's vein magazine for primary care physicians.

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