

Best time to deal with varicose veins is spring

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Like many women, Karen Special, 57, developed varicose veins during her first pregnancy. These unsightly veins became permanent while she was pregnant with her third child.

As an avid golfer, Special frequently wore skirts while she played. However, she became increasingly self-conscious about her legs as the veins became more apparent and ropelike over time. Special's varicose veins also grew to be more painful. She developed discomfort above her right knee and in her groin, which made exercising, gardening and housecleaning a challenge.

"Every year my varicose veins got a little worse, and I decided I couldn't take the pain anymore," Special said. "I decided 20 years after the birth of my last child to finally do something about my condition."

Special turned to physicians at Loyola University Health System for help during golf's off-season. She underwent a laser procedure and returned home the same day without any need for pain medication. The appearance of her legs improved dramatically within one month.

"I am very active, so I was pleased with how quickly I was able to get back to my life," Special said. "I also am pleased with the appearance of my legs, and I look forward to getting back onto the golf course without embarrassment and pain."

Loyola vascular surgeon Ross Milner, MD, FACS, reports spring is a good time to take care of varicose veins. Loyola physicians most

commonly use a laser to treat varicose veins. Patients begin this process with a consultation and an ultrasound to examine the legs. They also wear compression stockings to ease symptoms and prevent the varicose veins from getting worse. Surgeons then insert a small catheter into the veins and use a laser to destroy them.

“People with varicose veins should seek treatment if their veins are red, swollen or tender,” Dr. Milner said. “The spring is an ideal time to do this, because it allows plenty of time to recover before the patient has to wear summer clothes.”

Approximately 20 million people have varicose veins. They occur when valves weaken and stop pumping blood properly out of the [legs](#) and into the heart. In addition to the cosmetic concerns, they also can lead to leg ulcers if left untreated. Varicose veins can be genetic. Other causes include aging, being overweight or pregnant and regularly standing for a long time.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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