

# TRUTH or FICTION

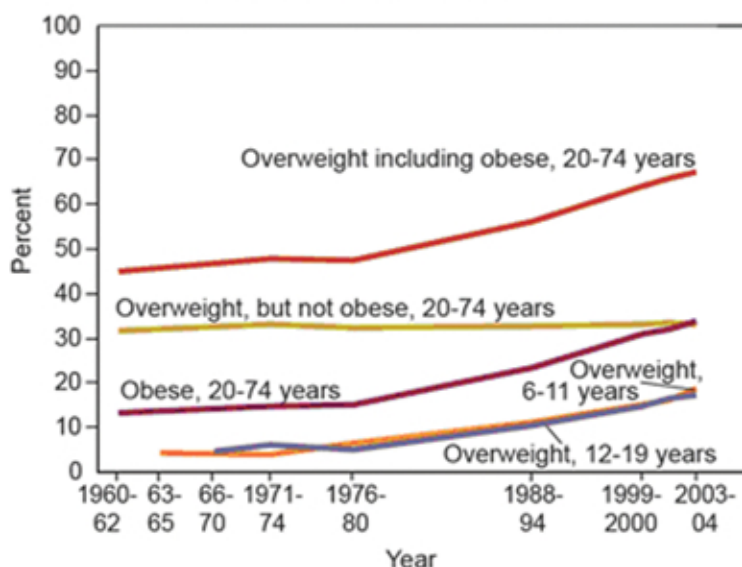
## RE: VEIN PROBLEMS IN THE OVERWEIGHT & OBESE

By Joseph Magnant, MD, FACS

**A**pproximately 40 Million adults in the USA are affected with severe superficial venous insufficiency, and many of these patients may have edema or swelling based on increased venous pressure in the legs caused by their leaky veins. Heredity has been firmly established as the primary cause of venous insufficiency although there are a number of other factors which contribute to worsening of the signs and severity of venous insufficiency. Pregnancy, overweight and obesity, sedentary occupations, advanced age, and any other conditions which increase intra-abdominal pressure are some of these factors. Many patients have been told that their swollen painful legs are related directly to their obesity and that weight loss alone will remedy their problem. Unfortunately, the symptoms of painful legs related to severe swelling often prevent these patients from performing the very exercises prescribed to lose their excess weight. The cycle becomes an impossible one for the overweight patient to break out of. The graph below reviews the increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the general adult population. As is quite evident the prevalence of overweight and obesity is on the rise and as this trend continues it is expected that a greater percentage of patients with familial venous insufficiency and varicose veins will likely present with more advanced signs and symptoms of the disease. One in five adult Americans has significant superficial venous insufficiency and in women over the age of 50, one in three is affected. When the prevalence of insufficiency in these populations are crossed with obesity and overweight statistics, it becomes clear that there are many overweight and obese adults with severe venous insufficiency, many of whom have been told their leg symptoms are primarily a weight induced problem and have likely given up on any hope of remedy of their leg discomfort and leg vein problems.

1. IF I LOSE 50-100 POUNDS MY VEIN PROBLEMS WILL RESOLVE.	<b>FICTION</b>
2. MY SWOLLEN LEGS ARE DIRECTLY DUE TO MY OBESITY.	<b>FICTION</b>
3. I HAVE TO LOSE ALL MY WEIGHT BEFORE I FIX MY VEINS.	<b>FICTION</b>
4. THE MAIN CAUSE OF VARICOSE VEINS IS OBESITY.	<b>FICTION</b>
5. I DON'T HAVE VISIBLE VARICOSE VEINS, SO MY PAINFUL RED LEGS ARE NOT RELATED TO LEAKY VEINS.	<b>FICTION</b>
6. I AM TALL AND THIN, SO I CAN'T HAVE VEIN PROBLEMS.	<b>FICTION</b>
7. I CAN'T EXERCISE BECAUSE OF MY PAINFUL, SWOLLEN LEGS; IS IT POSSIBLE THAT FIXING MY VEINS WILL IMPROVE MY ABILITY TO EXERCISE AND HELP ME LOSE MY EXCESS WEIGHT?	<b>TRUTH</b>
8. THE MAIN CAUSE OF VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY IS HEREDITY.	<b>TRUTH</b>
9. EXCESS WEIGHT, PREGNANCY, AGE, SEDENTARY OCCUPATIONS ARE ALL EXACERBATING FACTORS WHICH ADVERSELY INFLUENCE MY VEIN PROBLEMS, BUT FAMILY HISTORY IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF MY VEIN PROBLEMS!	<b>TRUTH</b>

Overweight and obesity



SOURCES: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Health, United States, 2006, Figure 13. Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Although it cannot be denied that overweight and obesity play an important role in exacerbating the condition of venous insufficiency, the underlying cause is HEREDITY. Rather than insist on weight loss alone as the primary treatment of the symptoms and signs of venous insufficiency, we must insist on venous insufficiency evaluation and diagnostic examination with modern ultrasound techniques in overweight and obese patients who present with significant symptoms. These may include but are not necessarily limited to swollen, painful legs, reddened and inflamed legs, varicose veins, discolored skin or ulcerations in the ankle regions or lower legs, nighttime leg