

GET THE WHOLE STORY.

There is a silent group of patients walking around with unexplained thick, swollen, aching legs and ankles. Yet, their condition can often be remedied permanently through a minimally invasive procedure that takes less than an hour.



Joseph G. Magnant, MD, FACS, is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and is board certified by the American Board of Surgery in vascular surgery. He earned his medical degree from Medical

College of Virginia. He completed a general surgery residency at Medical College of Virginia Hospitals and a fellowship in vascular surgery at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, NH. He opened Vein Specialists at Royal Palm Square after 14 years of practicing vascular surgery near Atlanta, GA. He is an active member of the American College of Phlebology, Society for Vascular Surgery, and Southern Association of Vascular Surgery.

Which system is better, radio-frequency or laser? Both are very effective, and each system has its place in the treatment of patients with venous disease. Treatment decisions are individualized based on vein size, body habitus and other anatomic considerations. We offer both technologies because as true vein specialists we believe patients deserve access to all current treatments. Approximately sixty percent of our patients undergo VNUS closure and the others Laser closure.

Swollen, achy legs can be painful and considered unsightly, but is there a medical reason to treat them? Left undiagnosed and untreated, leaky valves may lead to serious adverse changes in the health of leg skin and possible bleeding or skin ulceration. If we can diagnose and offer earlier minimally invasive treatment, we can help patients avoid later complications.

What about for patients who have been told that nothing can be done for their veins? We have successfully treated many of those patients. Ultrasound testing of patients with significant vein disease is an integral part of our comprehensive evaluation. With a dedicated and algorithmic approach to the investigation of venous insufficiency, a thoughtful planning of the treatment, and a skillful execution of the treatment, there is rarely a patient to whom we cannot offer some measure of improvement. We specialize in the treatment of veins: everything from spider veins; swollen, achy legs; leg ulcers; and large, ropey varicose veins to venous ulcers or nonhealing ulcers. I believe my status of being an experienced board-certified vascular surgeon with a strong dedication to venous evaluation and treatment contributes greatly to making Vein Specialists at Royal Palm Square the right choice for anyone considering vein evaluation and treatment.

Kris Kline, a staff writer at Florida Health Care News, conducted this interview with Dr. Magnant.

Smooth out your problem veins

Dr. Magnant welcomes all calls regarding this article as well as other topics related to veins. His office is located at 1510 Royal Palm Square Blvd., Suite 101, in Fort Myers. Please phone (239) 694-VEIN(8346) for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Although varicose veins are caused by leaky valves, not everyone with leaky valves has varicose veins. Instead, patients' calves may be stretched to nearly twice normal size with a resulting pain that can be almost disabling. To learn more about the disease behind these aching legs, Florida Health Care News turns to vein specialist Joseph G. Magnant, MD, FACS, a board-certified vascular

surgeon with a wealth of experience treating patients with vein disorders.

FAQs

Dr. Magnant, will you please explain to our readers what is meant by leaky valves? Healthy leg veins usually have a series of valves that open in one direction, allowing for flow in a segmental fashion up toward the heart. When the valves no longer close tightly, venous blood refluxes back down toward the feet, resulting in increased pressure in

the leg veins, which can lead to leg swelling and aching, skin discoloration, and leg ulcerations. This condition is often referred to as *venous insufficiency* or *venous incompetence*.

When we hear about venous insufficiency, we usually think of varicose veins. How do these differ? Varicose veins are dilated, abnormally-appearing veins usually found in the legs as a result of venous insufficiency. However, not everyone with leaky valves develops varicose veins. Some patients have what I describe as tube-like veins without significant external branches that extend straight down to their calves and transmit high pressure directly to the ankle region. These veins can then leak fluid into the tissue resulting in swelling and skin discoloration over time.

Please explain why that can happen. Veins are designed to contain approximately ten to fifteen millimeters of pressure. However, when patients suffer with venous insufficiency, their veins may be put under as much as forty to fifty millimeters of pressure, and because the veins are very thin-walled, as opposed to the thick wall of the artery, fluid can leak through them into the surrounding tissues, such as fat, muscle and skin. Over time this leads to the discoloration and thickening of the skin which may progress to ulcers.

What treatment do you use for these achy legs? Until 1999, we usually kept a careful eye on the patient's varicose veins because the only treatments we had to offer were compression stockings on the conservative end or surgical excision of veins known as *vein stripping*, which often required hospitalization, general anesthesia and an extended recovery period.

Fortunately, today we can treat leaky valves, varicose veins and leaky superficial veins with *endovenous closure of the saphenous veins*. Using a catheter-based system, the vein is heated and closed from the inside under local anesthesia. The first FDA-approved system was the radiofrequency-based closure system designed by VNUS Medical Technologies. In 2001, the first laser-based system was approved. The VNUS and laser systems allow us to treat patients in the office without anesthesia risks, and patients can return to normal activities almost immediately.

Enlightening dinner conversation

Betty J. Patti was in a lot of pain. "My legs ached all the time and my left leg was all knotted up," she describes. "It was covered with bumps."

Because Betty spends fifty percent of her workday on her feet, she would have to sit down whenever possible to get any relief at all.

"Then one day I read about Vein Specialists at Royal Palm Square," she remembers. "There was a photograph of a patient's leg before her treatment, and it looked just like mine, full of knots. Next to it was a second picture of her leg after the treatment, and I could see how smooth it looked."

Betty scheduled an appointment with Dr. Magnant.

"From the beginning I was very impressed with him," she recalls. "He was very thorough and I could tell he was very concerned about my condition. I've never met a physician with such a good bedside manner."

After a complete evaluation, Dr. Magnant recommended endovenous closure and microphlebectomy for Betty. The doctor explains that during microphlebectomy, which is performed under local anesthesia, varicose veins are removed through minimal incisions.

"Dr. Magnant did a fabulous job," assures Betty. "I was conscious during the procedure, but I was very relaxed



Betty was back at work the day after her vein treatment.

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BEFORE PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. MAGNANT

and don't remember feeling a thing.

"Then, by the next morning, I felt so good I called and asked the doctor if I

could go to work. He said that if I felt up to it I could go, so I did.

"I felt pain-free. None of my co-workers could believe it. They kept asking me why I wasn't home recuperating, but it was like an instant recovery."

Betty was so pleased with Vein Specialists at Royal Palm Square that she invited Dr. Magnant to deliver a speech to her dinner club.

"That's how impressed I was with him," she notes, "and he was gracious enough to accept. I wanted the other members to meet him and hear what he had to say, because I've never experienced anything like it in my life."