

Walking With Comfort and Confidence

James Fonger, M.D., helps patients feel more comfortable at work, at home, and in public.



“**P**eople typically present wanting their legs tuned-up for the second half of their lives,” says James Fonger, M.D., a Johns Hopkins-trained cardiovascular

surgeon at Gwinnett County’s Center for Vein Restoration (CVR) in Lawrenceville. The arteries deliver blood down to the leg, and the veins are the return system, getting the blood from the foot back up to the heart—but this means flowing uphill against gravity.

The calf muscle is your pump, contracting as you walk and pushing the blood upwards with one-way valves that keep it from falling back down. However, in 20% of people around midlife, these valves become leaky, much like brakes that wear out in your car. The blood then “refluxes,” falling back down, and pools in your calves, raising the tissue pressure, which causes the signs and symptoms of vein disease.

It’s a natural part of life, says Dr. Fonger, but there are typical risk factors: being female, past pregnancies, a family history of vein disease, occupations that involve prolonged standing, and advanced age. The classic symptoms are heavy, tired, achy, and painful legs later in the day, swollen ankles by evening, leg cramps that awake you from sleep, and restless leg syndrome. If this

goes untreated, then varicose veins, new spider veins, and reddening or darkening of the ankles begin to develop.

Stepping Into a New Life

The diagnosis of reflux (venous insufficiency) is confirmed in CVR’s office by ultrasound. The office staff then helps patients develop a treatment plan and schedule a series of short treatment visits at the office within their schedule. No general anesthesia is required, and the procedures are pain free with the use of a local numbing anesthetic.

The leaky veins are closed, and the blood is rerouted into the deep veins, which have no trouble getting the blood back to the heart. “I tell patients we’re closing Highway 120 and sending everyone on Interstate 85 inside their legs,” says Dr. Fonger. Varicose veins are removed to smooth out the leg, and darkening of the ankles fades over time. Spider veins are treated with sclerotherapy on Tuesday evenings in CVR’s special “Sclero after Hours” program.

Known for his extensive training and sense of humor, Dr. Fonger is committed to this full time, a rarity in the field. This allows him to “power through” patients’ treatments over a short period of time. CVR strives to provide comprehensive care so those they serve can have comfortable, attractive legs and get on with their life.

Wondering about **venous insufficiency**?

Consider these questions:

1. Do you develop heavy, tired, achy legs as the day goes on?
2. Are your ankles puffy or swollen when you go to bed?
3. Do you wake up during the night with leg cramps?
4. Do you suffer from restless leg syndrome?

If you have answered “**yes**,” take a closer look at your legs. Telltale signs are:

1. Varicose veins when standing or new blishes of spider veins
2. Darkening, reddening, or itching and dryness around your calves or ankles
3. Swollen or tender ankles as the day progresses



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