

Understanding Venous Reflux Study: A Patient's Guide

Sometimes, the veins of the lower legs don't flow smoothly, and blood starts flowing backwards, causing a condition called venous reflux. A venous reflux study is a specialized map for the veins of the lower legs to evaluate for venous reflux, which is abnormal venous return of the blood in the lower legs. This test allows doctors to see where the backward flow is happening and how severe it is.

What is venous reflux?

Venous reflux occurs when the valves in your veins, which normally prevent blood from flowing backwards, become weak or damaged. This allows blood to pool in your legs, causing symptoms like:

- Swelling: Your ankles, calves, or feet may appear swollen and feel heavy or tight.
- Pain: You may experience aching, throbbing, or burning pain in your legs, especially when standing or sitting for long periods.
- Skin changes: The skin on your legs may become dry, itchy, or discolored.
- Varicose veins: These are twisted, bulging veins that can be visible on the surface of your skin.

What does a venous reflux study involve?

A technician will apply gel to your legs and then use a probe to send sound waves into your veins. The sound waves bounce off your blood cells, creating a picture of the blood flow. This allows the doctor to see if there is any backward flow and how severe it is.

What happens after the study?

Once the study is complete, the doctor will discuss the results with you. They will explain the severity of your venous reflux and recommend treatment options. Treatment may include:

- Lifestyle changes: such as wearing compression stockings, elevating your legs, and losing weight.
- Medications: to help improve blood flow and reduce symptoms.
- Minimally invasive procedures: such as sclerotherapy (injecting a solution to close the veins) or laser ablation (using a laser to close the veins).

- Surgery: in severe cases, surgery may be necessary to remove the damaged veins.

Why is a venous reflux study important?

A venous reflux study is important because it can help doctors diagnose venous reflux and recommend the best treatment options. Early diagnosis and treatment can help prevent complications from venous reflux, such as ulcers and blood clots.

Here are some additional things to remember about venous reflux studies:

- They are safe and painless with minimal side effects.
- They usually take about 30 minutes to an hour.
- You may need to avoid wearing tight clothing or stockings on the day of the study.