

## HELP FOR VARICOSE VEINS



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Dr. Thomas Greenlee, left, and physician assistant Amy Harward numbed Pat Bale's leg as they performed what is known as a VNUS ClosureFAST procedure. It is used on people with varicose veins; a catheter inserted in the vein seals it closed using high heat. The blood in the leg then finds a new route.

# THE HEAT TREATMENT

Using radio waves, doctor seals off diseased blood vessels

By Amy Wilson

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Pat Bale weighs maybe 105. Her varicose veins are, needless to say, not a product of obesity. Rather, they are an unwelcome family inheritance, something she knew she was going to have to deal with when, in her 20s, she was already feeling tenderness behind her knees.

She's 60 now. And gravity — which she has dodged in some amazing ways with other body parts — seems to have taken its toll on her legs. Which is not to say they are not slim and tan. It is to say she has leaky valves in her greater saphenous veins, and that has created puddles of blood in some little basements in her lower legs.

That is painful — she has horrible leg cramps at night — and generally not pretty and, way worse than that, dangerous. Left untreated, the problem could put her at risk for chronic pain, swollen limbs, and leg and foot ulcers.

For now she has ropy, bulging, aching superficial venous reflux. And, after trying to handle the problem without surgery, she has decided,



**Above:** Greenlee fed a catheter into a diseased vein in Bale's left leg. The procedure took about 30 minutes. She could walk on the leg later that day. **Left:** This is the tip of the catheter Greenlee used. It gives off high heat to close varicose veins

with her doctor, to resolve the issue.

No, they are not going to do the traditional thing, that is, strip her veins, an evil sounding surgery if there ever there was one.

Instead, her doctor is going to employ a relatively new strategy that involves a local anesthetic, an ultrasound, a radio-frequency catheter and some searing heat (248 degrees Fahrenheit) to seal her veins from the inside out.

And, get this: She's going to walk

out of the office in less than an hour.

### Testing in Lexington

The closure procedure — the process of closing the veins from the inside out — has been around since about 2000, says Thomas Greenlee, vascular surgeon at Total Vein Care in Lexington and the doctor who will be performing Bale's surgery.

What's new since April is the redesign of the closure catheter and the ability to deliver that kind

### LOTS OF OPTIONS TO CONSIDER WITH YOUR DOCTOR:

**Sclerotherapy:** May be used to close small- and medium-size varicose veins. Veins are injected with a solution that causes a scar to form in the vein, which forces the vein to close and the blood to reroute through healthier veins. Does not require anesthesia and can be done in the doctor's office.

**Laser surgery:** Works by sending strong bursts of light into the vein that make the vein slowly fade and disappear.

**Catheter-assisted:** Uses radio waves, extreme heat (method discussed in this article). Laser also can be used to close the main vein or to remove the branch varicose veins.

This minimally invasive surgery is a newer treatment, usually for larger varicose veins. Patients are able to go home the same day and resume activities within a day.

**Surgical vein stripping:** Involves removing a long vein through small incisions and is an outpatient treatment for most people. Patients are typically able to resume normal activities within two weeks.

**Ambulatory phlebectomy:** Removal of smaller varicose veins through a series of tiny skin punctures. The patient is given local anesthesia and goes home the same day. Scarring is generally minimal.

**Endoscopic vein surgery:** Used only when the patient has advanced to the stage of having leg ulcers. Through a small incision, the doctor inserts a thin video camera to see and close varicose veins.

SOURCE: THE MAYO CLINIC

of high heat to effectively collapse veins so blood can no longer flow through them.

Have no fear, it's blood flow that can find another route, says Greenlee, as long as a patient has good

See **VEINS, C3**

# Store rebate programs make good cents



Deborah Morris' weekly column, The Fru-Gal, can help you get through these economic hard times a little more easily. If you know of a way to save money, feel free to share it on The Fru-Gal blog on Bluegrass Moms.com.



**DEBORAH MORRIS**  
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Let's talk about rebates. With a new month starting Wednesday come new freebies from our favorite rebate places such as Rite Aid and Walgreens. I talked to many people at The Fru-Gal Fair who have never used these programs, so let me explain: When you walk in the stores, grab a rebate brochure that sits near the front door. In it you will find items you

can receive free during that month through the store's rebate program.

Here's how it works: If you buy a product for \$3.99 and use a coupon for 50 cents the store will refund you \$3.99 even though you paid \$3.49.

And the rebate can all be done online. Go to [www.riteaid.com](http://www.riteaid.com) or [www.walgreens.com](http://www.walgreens.com), where you sign up for the rebate programs. Type in your receipt numbers and dates, and at the end of the month request a check.

Rebates work only during the month in which the store specifies they are available. And remember, as with the offers below, many of them

### The Fru-Gal is on the move

The Fru-Gal column is moving to the A La Carte section. Look for her there starting Thursday, Oct. 9.

are good only as long as supplies last.

### Travel and event freebies

- Free admission on your birthday during 2009 to one of the theme parks of the Disneyland or Disney World resorts.
- Stay at a Kentucky State Park lodge for \$50 when you present a coupon.

Good Sunday through Thursday until Dec. 30.

- Free Montana Vacation planner.
- Free *151 Travel Tips* booklet from Vantage Deluxe World Travel.

### Food freebies

- A sample of Bear Naked Fruit and Nut granola.
- Free bottle of Country Bob's All Purpose Sauce.
- Free Olive Garden recipes.
- Free *Healthy Soul Food Cookbook* with 43 recipes. Call 1-888-432-7822.
- Free spice recipes and coupons. Call 1-800-632-5847.

See **FRU-GAL, C2**

### COMMENTARY

## It could be worse — and it has been

Our parents knew how to cope in tough times



**MERLENE DAVIS**  
HERALD-LEADER COLUMNIST

I was talking with a friend last week, catching up on all the years we had not been in contact, when the conversation turned to the economy and our wallets.

We are both journalists, but his job in Mississippi seems more secure than mine here in Lexington.

Still, he was more worried and completely stressed out about it.

At 48, he isn't married but he has a daughter in college. He has traveled the world covering sports but hasn't managed to save much money.

He was telling me that his credit score couldn't get any lower and that these are the worst economic times he has ever seen.

Oh, no, I said. There have been far worse times.

I told him about the times when mortgage interest rates could be as high as 17 percent, and how my husband and I were blessed some 25 years ago to get a mortgage rate of 10¼ percent.

Hard times, I said, were when I went without a meal as a single mother to ensure my daughter ate. Hard times were when I paid \$20 for a good pair of shoes that I then wore for the two years it took to finish my degree at the University of Kentucky.

He didn't agree. We ended the conversation on good terms but with no indication he was willing to sacrifice anything to have better credit.

But there have been far worse times than these. My parents lived through one called the Great Depression. So did Cara Richards' parents.

Richards, anthropology professor emeritus at Transylvania University, said she was about 7 or 8 when she received her first lesson in economics.

While doing her homework in the kitchen, Richards sometimes would see her mother taking the family's daily earnings and divvying it up among several envelopes that were kept safely in a box. It was 1934 or 1935, Richards recalled.

"My parents both taught private singing lessons in New York," she said, "and when they came home in the evening, my mother would go in and sit at the kitchen table with a box full of envelopes. One was for gas or a car. One said rent. At the time, we were renting."

Other envelopes were the studio rental in New York City, insurance and food.

"She would take the money, the cash, and put it out on the table and divvy it up depending on what was needed," Richards said. Anything left over was for

See **DAVIS, C3**

### Merlene Davis is trading spaces

Starting Thursday, Merlene Davis' column will appear in City/Region on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.