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# Pelvic Venous Disorders and Chronic Pelvic Pain

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## Pelvic Venous System – How does it work?

The body’s venous system drains blood from organs and returns blood to the heart and lungs to become oxygenated. The pelvic venous system is made up of several venous collecting areas around the pelvic organs. The collecting areas, also called plexi, then drain into the large pelvic veins which feed up the body, back to the heart.

## How Can the Veins Cause an Issue?

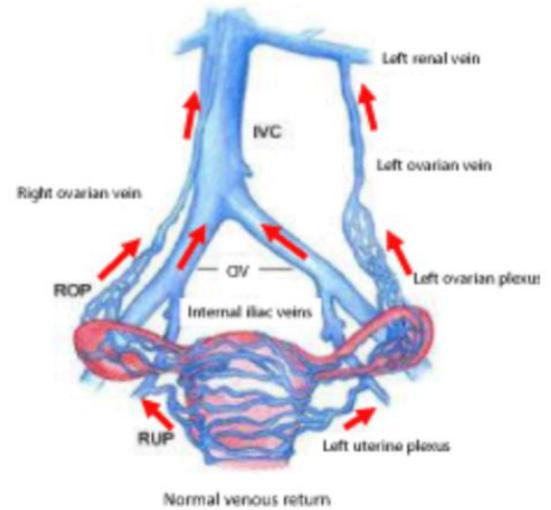
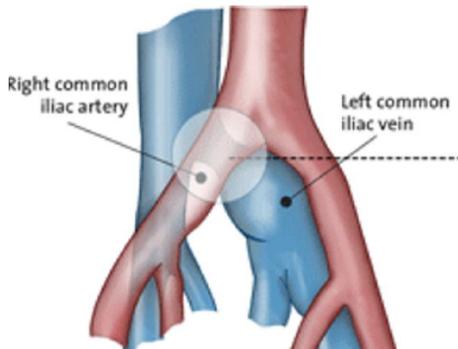
Abnormalities with the veins can cause pelvic congestion be related to symptoms of pain in the pelvis by 2 pathways:

### 1. Venous Reflux

Reflux means lack of forward flow of the blood. It can involve veins in the pelvis or in the pelvic floor. This leads to varicosities, or dilated, blood filled veins. This can lead to pelvic discomfort due to inflammation from the venous collections or even visible varicose veins on the vulva.

### 2. Venous Obstruction

Occurs when the blood flow in a vein is blocked. Most commonly occurs when the right common iliac artery crosses over and compresses the left common iliac vein. This leads to reflux, as described above since the blood is not able to move past the point of obstruction.



## Diagnosis

Making the diagnosis of pelvic congestion relies on patient report of symptoms (worse with walking or standing, better with lying; post-intercourse aching), physical exam findings (ovarian point tenderness, pain with upward motion of the cervix), and imaging showing enlarged veins.

## Treatment Options

There are 2 primary treatment options – embolization or stent insertion. Both procedures are done through interventional radiology techniques – meaning imaging (such as CT scan) is used to direct treatment without the need for major surgery. Instead, the targeted areas are assessed through with catheters through blood vessels.