

Meet Dr. Colleen Hupp, DO
Vascular Surgeon
Colorado Cardiovascular Surgical Associates (CCVSA)

Bachelor's Degree: University of Colorado, Boulder

DO: Kansas City University College of Osteopathic Medicine, Missouri (formerly University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine)

General Surgery Residency: General Surgery, University of Kansas, Kansas City

Vascular Surgery Fellowship: University of Missouri, Columbia

General and Vascular Surgery Certifications: The American Board of Surgery

When Colleen Hupp was a teenager, she slipped on ice while helping her family load the car for a ski trip. Instead of carving turns on the slopes, Hupp had surgery to mend her broken ankle. Soon after, Hupp ran into her surgeon at a high school career day. He invited her to spend a day shadowing him and watching surgeries. Hupp was fascinated — and hooked. “I grew up hearing my mom says that she regretted not becoming a doctor,” Hupp recalls. Soon, Hupp was pursuing her own career in medicine. Today, she’s a vascular surgeon with Colorado Cardiovascular Surgical Associates (CCVSA).

Q: What attracted you to vascular surgery?

Dr. Hupp: During a surgical rotation as a third-year medical student, I discovered that I loved being in the operating room. Patients would arrive with a problem that I was able to assess and then surgically fix. It was a good feeling. I liked that procedural aspect, as well as being able to send someone home in better shape than when they came in. I choose vascular surgery because the procedures can significantly change a person’s quality of life.

Q: What do you enjoy most about being a vascular surgeon?

Dr. Hupp: Vascular surgery is a specialty that allows me to really connect with my patients. These aren’t one-and-done procedures where I fix something and then see the patient once afterward. Vascular disease is often a long-term condition that requires lifelong care. I get to follow a patient’s recovery and progress for years. This gives me the chance to know patients and their families. I truly look forward to catching up and hearing about their lives.

I also like the complexities of vascular surgery. There’s a lot of critical thinking involved. My job as a vascular surgeon is to get the blood from point A to point B. But there are many different ways to do that. Even with the most well-planned surgeries, there’s always the potential of things not going as expected. Sometimes, you have to come up with a new plan while in the middle of an operation. I’m something of an adrenaline junky. I work well under pressure, which is important when you’re faced with unexpected challenges or when you’re treating a life-threatening problem like a ruptured aneurysm. I’ve been told that I do an excellent job at keeping people calm and steady during stressful times.

Q: What are your vascular surgery specialties?

Dr. Hupp: I treat all types of vascular problems. About 70% of the procedures take place at Sky Ridge Medical Center in Lone Tree. These include surgeries to treat:

- **Aneurysms**, a bulge in the artery wall that can burst and become life-threatening
- **Carotid artery disease**, blockages or narrowing of arteries in the neck that carry blood from the heart to the brain
- **Peripheral artery disease (PAD)**, blockages in arteries that carry blood from the heart to the legs, arms and other parts of the body

I also perform procedures to create vascular access for people with kidney failure who need hemodialysis. At my office, I'm able to treat varicose veins, spider veins and other minor venous problems.

Q: What can patients expect when they come to see you?

Dr. Hupp: As a doctor of osteopathic medicine, I consider every aspect of a person's health and life when developing a treatment plan. This holistic approach to patient care is one of the aspects that drew me to osteopathic medicine. I create treatment plans based on what will get a patient the best results and allow them to enjoy life to the fullest. To do this, I dedicate time to getting to know a patient, such as their interests and hobbies, and how they like to spend their days. My goal is to help patients continue doing all the things that bring them joy.

Q: Why did you join Colorado Cardiovascular Surgical Associates (CCVSA)?

Dr. Hupp: I respected CCVSA's commitment to excellent patient care. Bringing in money for the practice is never part of the equation when I assess a patient and develop a treatment plan. While you would hope that all practices would put a patient's well-being first, this isn't always the case. Money can be a big motivator for some. At CCVSA, we select the procedure that will safely get the best outcomes for a patient. It's not about billing for costly procedures.

Q: Do you and your colleagues work together as a team to provide different aspects of patient care?

Dr. Hupp: We sometimes work together to perform complex surgical procedures. For example, previously placed aortic grafts can develop infections. This is rare, but when it happens, we have to remove the infected graft and put in a new one. The procedure becomes more challenging because of the infection and scar tissue from the previous surgery. I may ask a CCVSA colleague to assist with this type of procedure to lower the risk of surgical complications for the patient and get the best results.

Q: What are your future career ambitions or work-life goals?

Dr. Hupp: I see myself staying on as a part of the CCVSA team and continuing to mentor medical residents. Before coming to CCVSA, I worked for three years as an assistant professor at the University of Kansas Medical Center. I really enjoyed helping medical students and residents progress through their training. Recently, I've gotten involved with the medical residency training programs at Sky Ridge and Swedish Medical Center in Englewood.

I would especially like to serve as a mentor for female medical residents interested in vascular surgery. Nationwide, there's a lack of female surgeons in all surgical fields. When I was a resident, there were three women — out of 25 residents — pursuing vascular surgical careers. There's a misperception that it's difficult for female surgeons to have a good work-life balance. I'm proof that this isn't true. I have three children, a happy home life and marriage, and a fulfilling career. It's absolutely possible to make it work.

Q: What are your outside interests?

Dr. Hupp: I've been an avid equestrian since my parents got me my first horse at age 9. I even took my horses with me when I went to medical school in Kansas. My passion for horses inspired my husband, Mike, to become a veterinarian specializing in equine medicine. He wasn't much of a horse person until we started dating.

Now, our daughters, Ava and Alice, compete in equestrian sports. Their younger brother, Harrison, isn't far behind. Everyone in the family enjoys ridings. We currently have one horse and the cutest pony named Jack. Our dream is to one-day build at barn at our house to continue taking care of our retired horses. For stress relief, I run about 15 miles a week with our two Australian Shepherd dogs.