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SCLEROTHERAPY OF VARICOSE VEINS

What is a varicose vein?

A dilated tortuous superficial vein that is cosmetically unsightly and can give symptoms. Small ones are called spider veins or telangiectasia.

What is Sclerotherapy?

It is the use of an irritant solution or foam to destroy a vein. The solution/foam is placed into the vein by injection to irritate the linings of the vein so causing the walls to become adherent, to collapse and to become fibrosed and disappear.

Who can be treated?

Local sclerotherapy can flatten areas of superficial veins remarkably. The deep veins still return blood from your legs to your heart. Anyone can be treated providing there are no contra indications.

Contra Indications:

- Previous deep venous thrombosis.
- Pregnancy.
- Topical steroid use/Hormone treatment.
- Specific allergy to the agent (very rare).
- Severe peripheral artery disease.
- Diabetic neuropathy.

Please discuss any personal allergies.

What happens? :

The procedure is performed in our consulting rooms and takes 15-20 minutes. No sedation or pre-procedure starvation is necessary. It causes mild discomfort only. Wear sensible clothing e.g. loose trousers. Often because a limit to the total dose, several sessions are required.

A rubber tourniquet may be used to dilate the veins with the patient standing. The large deep veins may need to be cannulated under ultrasound control. Fine needles are used usually without local anaesthetic. Once the solution is injected compression is maintained with firm but not tight bandages. If at any time the bandage feels too tight or the toes become numb or sore call the doctor. Bandages can be changed and reapplied at any time. After the procedure walk for 15-20 minutes. This keeps the veins collapsed and allows the sclerosant solution to work well.

You can walk normally. Do not have the leg dependent for long periods and elevate the leg when sitting. (Some cramps are normal for a few days. Time off work till bandages come off is useful but not essential and should be based on work requirements. Check with your doctor.

Return Visit:

After 4 - 7 days, the bandages come off. The effect of the treatment is reviewed. Initially the veins may look **worse**. There is bruising, hardening of the skin and inflammation (reaction to the agent) locally. Some hyperpigmentation (increase in colour where the vein was) persists for several months.

A complication is a break down in the skin (that would leave a scar) over the vein. This is very unusual. A reactionary appearance of **finer spindly veins** may be seen over the area (telangiectasia) in some cases.

The doctor may wish you to use compression stockings for a while, but often nothing is needed. A review in a month is helpful to assess progress. Repeat injection sclerotherapy can be performed at one to two month intervals. Avoid local moisturizers or creams immediately before and after treatments. Do not limit activity.

Recurrence is possible as previous undilated areas not sclerosed can dilate naturally or sclerosed areas themselves may recur. This is solved by repeat injections.

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