



SCOTTISH VEIN CENTRE PATIENT INFORMATION

MICRO-SCLEROTHERAPY FOR THREAD AND SPIDER VEINS

Please read this information carefully. This pamphlet will give you information about your condition and help answer your questions. It does not replace discussion with your vein specialist or own doctor. Feel free to ask about anything you do not understand.

Do my thread veins mean I have varicose veins?

Your thread veins (also called spider veins or broken veins) are very small veins (less than 2 millimetres) just under the skin, that have lost their normal function (getting smaller when cold and larger when hot as part of temperature control). Some people get thread veins along with larger veins that bulge under the skin, called varicose veins. Not all people with thread veins have varicose veins and vice versa.

How can you tell if I have varicose veins too?

The Scottish Vein Centre will routinely perform a special ultrasound scan on everyone we see. More than half the people we scan with thread veins will have slightly deeper and larger (less than 3mm) feeding veins (also called reticular veins) that connect these very small veins to a type of varicose vein that has increased pressure and shows reversed blood flow. In some cases these feeding veins connect to typical varicose veins. These arise from damage to internal valves within veins, while standing or straining, and blood is unable to flow uphill against the effect of gravity. These veins are said to be incompetent and usually require more treatment than just micro-sclerotherapy thread vein removal.

What does micro-sclerotherapy mean?

Sclerotherapy is the term used to describe the technique of injecting a substance directly into a vein under the skin surface to cause it to shrink away. Microsclerotherapy is a version of this technique using very small needles in very small superficial thread veins. The substance injected is a chemical called a sclerosant, that irritates the lining of the vein wall. The vein collapses down and closes off. Direct continuous pressure on the vein following injection prevents it re-filling with more blood.



What is involved with micro-sclerotherapy thread vein removal?

The liquid chemical sclerosant is injected directly into the small thread vein, using the smallest needle that is made. We use a bright light and large magnifying glass to help. The vein specialist doctor will use multiple injections at different places in one or both legs and after each injection his/her assistant (one of our trained nurses) will apply direct pressure and sometimes a small dressing to each site. As many as eight or ten injections are possible per leg at each session. They are almost painless, as the needle is so small and the liquid has it's own local anaesthetic effect. At the end of the session, the doctor will apply two layer bandages, over which, the nurse will fit a specially measured pressure stocking to the whole leg (or legs).This will have been measured up at your initial consultation and scan visit. They will give you full advice on stocking application and maintenance.

Do I have to wear pressure stockings?

The use of bandaging and graduated pressure stockings is crucial to the best outcome of your procedure. If you do not wear the bandages and stockings as instructed, then there is a much greater chance of unwanted side-effects, such as pigmentation and permanent staining of the skin, as well as more likelihood of the veins staying or getting worse. The bandaging should be worn day and night, for the first 5 days. The stockings are worn during the day for at least two weeks after micro-sclerotherapy vein treatment.

How long will my treatment take?

At your initial visit your vein specialist will discuss the treatment plan and duration. This depends on both the type of veins you have (as assessed by ultrasound) and also the extent and number of thread veins on one or both of your legs. We would normally perform micro-sclerotherapy in sessions at least eight weeks apart to allow healing in between. Therefore if you need four or more sessions (which is not unusual), it can take up to one year to achieve a satisfactory and lasting result.

What type of results can I expect?

Micro-sclerotherapy will obliterate larger spider veins and take away more obvious unsightly appearances. There is no guarantee that the procedure will completely abolish all of your thread veins. These veins form as an ongoing process with time and may recur, or appear as new veins at different sites on your legs. Prominent veins below your ankles



are more difficult to abolish, and treating these may have more unwanted side-effects. We will monitor your progress by taking photographs at stages throughout your course of treatment.

What type of side-effects can happen?

Complications of micro-sclerotherapy thread vein removal are not uncommon, occurring in one in every six patients, but these are usually not serious. During and after the procedure some patients feel a prickly, mildly painful sensation at the injection sites. Only a small number of patients experience inflammation of the superficial veins, known as thrombophlebitis, or surrounding tissues (cellulitis). Only very rarely will this inflammation result in a broken sore (ulcer) on the skin. This will heal with a small white scar.

Occasionally blood within treated thread veins becomes trapped and if left in place can cause a pigmented brown line or pigmentation of the tissues. We will see all our micro-sclerotherapy patients 4 weeks after injection and can release this trapped blood easily with a pin-prick.

Careful technique during injection will avoid damage to local skin nerves (which can cause loss of local sensation) and damage to small arteries, which can cause blockage to the blood vessels of the toes. These are very rare problems which can happen with too many injections below the ankle. Only a few times has a severe allergic reaction been reported in many hundreds of thousands of cases worldwide.

Are there alternatives to this procedure?

Your vein specialist is trained to assess what are the best treatment options for your vein problems. An ultrasound scan will also help to decide. There are other direct skin treatments for thread veins, but we do not recommend any of these. Currently no skin ointments have been medically proven to be effective. Different forms of laser energy or intense light therapy are available. This energy is applied all the way through the tissues to above and around the small veins. They act by coagulating the blood in the vein and by irritating the vein wall. There is therefore an increased chance of local tissue inflammation and pigmentation along the dead veins and in the surrounding tissues. Some treatments may leave small healed white spots, particularly with more sensitive pale skin. Avoidance of exposure of the treated skin to the sun during and after these courses of treatment is recommended by the laser



clinics providing these therapies. Not all of these therapies are provided by medical specialists.

Are there ways to avoid side-effects and improve results?

Immediately after micro-sclerotherapy, the specially fitted compression stockings should be worn as directed, and instructions strictly followed. You will be asked to return for a check-up 4 weeks after injection treatment. At this point there may be some dark lines along the treated veins containing trapped blood. Our nurse can easily release this with a single pin-prick and apply a local dressing, before reapplying your compression stocking. This will avoid unwanted pigmentation and produce a better, longer-lasting aesthetic result.

What do I need to do after the procedure?

You may resume your normal activities straight away on leaving our clinic. Avoid very energetic exercise for a few days. Swimming may be resumed after the first week. Your normal hygiene practice can be followed, but do not shower with the stocking on. It can be washed, rinsed and dried easily (overnight in week two).

We are happy to provide a second pair of stockings, if you are having both legs treated. This would be an additional cost, but can prove useful, particularly if a longer term course of injections is planned.

If you have any further queries concerning this procedure, or if there are any more points you would like clarified, then please do not hesitate to contact us at Scottish Vein Centre, Edinburgh.

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