

Sclerotherapy Patient Information Sheet

Please read through this information carefully. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Keep this information to review before and after treatment.

What is sclerotherapy?

Sclerotherapy is an injection treatment and used to eliminate small to medium size varicose veins and “spider” veins. “Spider” veins are superficial telangiectasias, tiny vessels that are red, blue or purple in color. The majority of these veins present as a cosmetic problem.

How does sclerotherapy work?

A very small needle is used to inject a sclerosing solution into a varicose or “spider” vein. Once injected, the cells that line the vein wall (endothelium) will become irritated, inflamed and damaged. External compression is applied using an ace bandage after the procedure and support hose for 1-2 weeks following the procedure. The compression causes the vein walls to seal together and the vein no longer can transport blood. Your body then breaks down and absorbs the damaged vein. When healing is complete, the vein is no longer visible. The process is similar to how your body heals a bad bruise. Reducing or eliminating varicose veins can improve your circulation and symptoms of heaviness, aching, and fatigue.

How many treatments are needed?

The number of treatments needed varies from patient to patient depending on the type, size, and quantity of veins to be treated. Varicose veins and “spider” veins most always require more than one injection session. Subsequent treatments are usually scheduled every 4-6 weeks to allow time for the body to respond to treatment. It is important to realize that the best results require patience. It takes time for your body to respond to the injections. On average, patients experience about a 40% improvement after each session. It is important to follow the post-treatment instructions to optimize your results. Your body will continue to heal and “fade” injection sites for months after treatment.

After your initial screening exam we will give you an estimate as to the number of treatments that may be required. This is based on your assessment, your history and expectations. You may end up needing fewer or more treatments than our initial estimate. It is important to discuss your expected outcomes with the sonographer or physician and to keep them realistic. We will do everything possible to meet or exceed your expectations.

What to expect:

Photographs will be taken before treatment is initiated. This helps to monitor your progress. Your legs will look worse before they look better. After the vein is damaged the body needs time to heal. Most people notice a dramatic improvement approximately four weeks after their initial treatment. Maximal improvement often takes several months and several treatments. There is no guarantee sclerotherapy will be effective in every case. Some veins and areas will need to be retreated. Recurrence of the same vein treated rarely occurs with proper injection technique and compliance with post treatment instructions. Later on, new varicose or “spider” veins may form requiring subsequent treatment. Periodic re-evaluations are encouraged so that any new veins that develop can be injected before they become too large or too numerous.

Common Side Effects

Trapped Blood:

Sclerotherapy of larger veins (large than “spider” telangiectasias) often results in the collection of trapped blood. This consists of old, clotted semi-liquid blood. It is not dangerous and does not move to other parts of the body, but can delay healing and increase the chance skin discoloration. If you develop a raised or tender area within a treated vein, with or without visible dark purple blood, notify our technician and schedule a visit. We will evaluate the area and, usually, will drain the trapped blood using a small needle. This will improve the tenderness and will decrease the likelihood of skin discoloration.

Itching:

You may experience itching around the area(s) injected. If this occurs, it is usually mild and lasts for one to two days.

Hyperpigmentation:

A light brown discoloration of the skin may develop along the vein in the area injected. Approximately 20-30% of the patients treated note the discoloration, which is lighter and less obvious than the vein being treated. The hyperpigmentation usually fades in a couple of weeks, but may take several months to a year to totally resolve. There is a 1-2% incidence of hyperpigmentation continuing after one year.

Telangiectatic Matting:

The formation of new, fine "spider" veins in the area injected occurs in approximately 10% of patients injected. The exact reason for this occurring is unknown. If untreated, the matting usually resolves in 3-12 months but, very rarely, it can be permanent. If the matting does not fade, it can be re-injected.

Pain:

It is common to have some tenderness at the injection site. Injection of the sclerosing agent can be uncomfortable, but is usually well tolerated by most patients. The discomfort is temporary, lasting one to at most seven days. Ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) is recommended for discomfort and helps the healing process. Please use these products according to their label instructions.

Bruising:

May occur at the injection site(s).

Rare Side Effects**Ulceration at the Injection Site:**

Very rarely a small ulcer will occur at the site where the vein is injected. An ulcer can take 4-6 weeks to completely heal. Please treat this area with Neosporin ointment twice a day. A small scar may result.

Allergic Reaction:

There is a very rare incidence of an allergic reaction to the solution injected. You will be observed for any reaction such as this and you will be treated appropriately should it occur. Please inform us of any allergy history.

Pulmonary Embolus/Deep Vein Thrombosis:

This is blood clot to the lungs or a blood clot in the deep vein. In the medical literature there is an extraordinarily low incidence of this complication.

Alternatives to Sclerotherapy:

You may choose no therapy. The existing varicose and "spider" veins may progress and new veins may form. You may be re-evaluated periodically to monitor your condition.

You may choose to only wear compression support hose (if this is an appropriate treatment for your problem). Compression hose promote venous blood return to the heart. If support hose is worn daily, symptoms such as aching, heaviness and tiredness are often alleviated. They also may help prevent the progression and formation of varicose and "spider" veins.

Sclerotherapy Pre-Treatment Instructions**Compression Hose:**

You are required to wear compression hose immediately after most injection treatments. You will receive a prescription for compression stockings that you can purchase at a pharmacy. **You cannot be injected without your compression hose.** The hose must be worn continuously for 24 hours after your treatment and then may be removed while sleeping and worn daily, during the waking hours for seven more days. Your doctor may adjust the length of time to wear your hose. **The compression hose is critical to the success of treatment.**

Leg Preparation:

Do not apply any oil, lotion or powder to your legs the night before or the day of your injections.

Clothing:

Wear loose, comfortable clothes (shorts preferred) and comfortable shoes to accommodate the ace bandage and hose after your treatment.

Time Allotment:

A sclerotherapy treatment should last 30 minutes. You should arrive 15 minutes early to allow time for check-in, sign consents and take pre-treatment photographs. You should then allow approximately 15 minutes to apply your support hose, change clothes and check-out at the office. If you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment, please give our office at least 48 hours notice.

Photographs:

Pre-treatment photographs will be taken of your legs before your treatment to document your progress.

Sclerotherapy Post-Treatment Instructions**Compression:**

Ace bandages are used to provide local compression over each area injected. Before standing, we will put on your compression hose. **Proper compression is very important because it minimizes the blood re-entering the injected vein, decreases the incidence of post sclerotherapy hyperpigmentation, and telangiectatic matting and improves venous blood flow.** The ace bandages can be uncomfortable. After the first 24 hours, the ace bandages may be removed. After the initial 24 hours of continuous use of the hose, you should continue to wear the hose for one week during waking hours. If larger varicose veins are injected, you may be advised by your doctor to wear them for two weeks.

Bathing:

A shower is allowed after the first 24 hours after treatment. Hot baths, hot tubs and saunas should be avoided for two weeks after sclerotherapy to avoid venous dilation.

Hyperpigmentation:

If you develop hyperpigmentation after sclerotherapy, you should apply sun block to those areas when exposure is anticipated to avoid increasing the hyperpigmentation. Continue to use sun block until the hyperpigmentation has resolved.

Driving:

You may drive immediately after your treatment. If your trip home is longer than an hour, we recommend you stop hourly to stretch your legs.

Activity:

In most cases, you may return to work and resume normal activities after treatment. **We recommend that you walk 30 minutes per day including the day of treatment.** Walking promotes efficient venous circulation. Avoid sitting and standing for extended period and elevate your leg(s) above the level of your heart when possible for the next two to three days. If large varicose veins were injected, your doctor may recommend you stay off your feet with your leg(s) elevated for the rest of the day. Avoid high impact aerobics, jogging, running, leg weight lifting, and sit-ups for one to two weeks after each injection treatment.

Medications:

You may take Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) for pain or discomfort.

Follow-up:

Subsequent treatments are usually every 4-6 weeks. Your doctor will advise you when you should return. If you notice dark knots or cords ("trapped blood") at your injection sites, please call our office: you may need to return sooner or have these areas aspirated. Please call our office at (858) 485-6500 if you have any questions or concerns before or after your sclerotherapy treatment. If you need to cancel or reschedule a sclerotherapy treatment or follow-up appointment, please give our office 48 hour notice.