

Aesthetic Complications Expert Group Sclerotherapy





Patient Information Leaflet

Sclerotherapy

When considering **sclerotherapy** treatment, we want you to have a safe treatment. Some risks are unavoidable and out of your control, but the following information should allow you to know what to expect and what you should ask of your practitioner.

What is Sclerotherapy?

Sclerotherapy is a treatment for those unsightly small veins on the legs. A drug called a sclerosant is injected directly into the problem veins causing damage which triggers a natural healing response, causing them to fade away over time. **ALL** sclerosants are prescription only medicines (POMS) and anyone who is considering this treatment, **must have a face to face consultation with a prescribing practitioner before having any treatment.**

Key Points:

- ✓ Sclerotherapy is the gold standard treatment for unsightly leg veins (spider veins- not varicose veins)
- ✓ Sclerosants are Prescription Only Medicine (POM)
- ✓ Results can take several months to achieve
- ✓ More than one treatment session is required, usually 4- 12 weeks apart

- ✓ Usual activities may be resumed immediately after treatment, although certain activities are restricted post-treatment
- ✓ Permanent improvement can be achieved on treated veins, but new veins may develop over time.

How does it work?

Very small needles are used to inject small amounts of sclerosant into the problem veins. The sclerosant causes damage or destroys the lining of the vein. The lining of the vein then swells and becomes sticky, blood cells clump and attach to the damaged vein wall closing the vein and beginning a healing process which leads to the vein fading away.

The practitioner will assess your veins and inject the appropriate strength and volume of sclerosant to obtain the desired results. However, more than one treatment is often required and not all treated veins will disappear as the body may repair the damaged veins following treatment. Further treatments can be performed to achieve optimum results.

Your practitioner may use a Veinlite® or other imaging device to better visualise the veins and make the treatment more effective.

What areas can be treated?

Sclerotherapy is ideal for treating leg veins, ranging from the tiny patches of matting up to small varicose veins. A handheld Doppler assessment should be performed prior to treatment to identify any areas of venous incompetence (back flow of blood through damaged valves in the veins).

Larger varicose veins or where there is venous incompetence, alternative methods of treatment should be considered including foam sclerotherapy, endovenous laser (destroying the vein wall using a laser device) or surgery. A full Doppler assessment should be performed before these procedures and your practitioner may advise an alternative practitioner if they do not offer these treatments.

Does it hurt?

A tiny needle is used and only the very tip of it is inserted, so most people hardly feel the injections at all and describe the treatment as a mild discomfort at worse. There are different sclerosants available for sclerotherapy some are painless, and some are more uncomfortable. Remember to ask your practitioner this question prior to treatment.

Itching or stinging can be experienced following injections and may last a few days as the sclerosant can be mildly irritating to the surrounding skin. Anti-histamines can be taken if itching is more severe. When larger veins are treated, these can ache after prolonged standing for a short time afterwards.

What can I expect after treatment?

You should receive a post-treatment information leaflet from your practitioner providing written advice on your aftercare and what you should do if you feel there has been a problem.

Immediately after treatment, your legs will have areas of redness, welts like nettle stings and possibly some bruising. Any redness or welts will usually settle within a few hours. Bruising may take a couple of weeks to disappear. The veins will often look worse (darker) before they get better and there may be an area of brown staining where the veins have disappeared, the avoidance of sun-exposure and sunbeds and the use of a high SPF sun protectant will considerably lessen this risk.

Most practitioners advocate the use of compression hosiery after the treatment, which help improve the results of the treatment and help to reduce any possible side-effects.

Improvement should not be expected until after the first 12 weeks.

- ✓ Take a 10-minute walk immediately following treatment.
- ✓ Unless instructed otherwise by your treating practitioner, wear the support hosiery day and night for 3 days (72 hours). After 72 hours you may take the hosiery off for a short time to have a cool shower or bath. Wear the hosiery during the day for a further 5 - 7 days, removing it overnight.
- ✓ Do not be alarmed if the treated areas look worse when you remove the hosiery – this is completely normal at this stage.
- ✓ You can bathe during this time – put a plastic bag over the hosiery or keep your compression hosiery on – it will quickly dry!
- ✓ Avoid extremes of temperature for 14 days i.e. very hot baths, saunas, sun beds, ice-packs.
- ✓ Avoid sun exposure for 4 weeks – pigmentation may be enhanced and take longer to fade.
- ✓ Avoid high impact exercise for at least 2 weeks.
- ✓ Avoid waxing of the legs for 4 weeks.
- ✓ Elevate your legs as much as possible for the first two weeks.
- ✓ Do not take long-haul flights within 4 weeks of treatment.
- ✓ Consider wearing long term compression hosiery to reduce the appearance of thread veins.
- ✓ Do not forget to bring your support hosiery with you to your next treatment session!



How long will it last?

Veins that have been successfully treated are gone for good, however there is no cure for the underlying cause, and you may or may not find a need to have further treatment sessions in the future.

Is it safe?

Sclerotherapy is considered a very safe treatment, but not without any risks or side effects.

Common side effects include:

- ✓ Redness, itching, stinging and welts, not unlike nettle stings, which usually resolve within a few hours
- ✓ Bruising which may take two weeks or longer to resolve
- ✓ Brown staining of the treatment area, which may take up to 18 months to fade
- ✓ The appearance of new, tiny, red veins in or near the treatment area

Complications to be aware of:

- ✓ Skin damage, including ulceration.
- ✓ Hard lumps or haematomas present in the treatment area
- ✓ Inflammation of the vein (phlebitis) causing pain, redness and inflammation
- ✓ Allergic reactions to the sclerosant
- ✓ Very rarely, developing a blood clot or deep vein thrombosis

If you develop any complication, it is essential to seek urgent advice as soon as you are aware of a problem.

Am I suitable for treatment?

There are several medical conditions and medications that may mean you are not suitable for treatment. A full medical history and assessment of your condition is necessary in advance of any decision to treat.

The following may mean you are not suitable for treatment:

- ✓ Hypersensitivity or allergy to the product
- ✓ Pregnancy or breastfeeding
- ✓ Infection or inflammation at the treatment site
- ✓ Bleeding disorders or taking blood-thinning medication
- ✓ Immunosuppression (due to a medical condition or medication)
- ✓ Chronic disease
- ✓ Uncontrolled diabetes
- ✓ Obesity
- ✓ Immobility or reduced mobility
- ✓ Under the age of 18 years
- ✓ Body dysmorphia or mental illness
- ✓ Recent anti-inflammatory medication or alcohol
- ✓ Inability to wear compression hosiery (arterial disease)
- ✓ Planning a long-haul flight within 4 weeks of treatment

- ✓ A past medical history of DVT (blood clots), phlebitis (inflammation of the veins) or cellulitis (skin infections)

Choosing your practitioner

Ensure you know the following information:

- ✓ The full name of the practitioner who is treating you
- ✓ Their qualification (doctor, dentist, registered nurse or other)
- ✓ Contact details (address, telephone and email)
- ✓ An emergency contact number for out of normal office hours



These are essential should you have a complaint or a problem and need to escalate it to any external authority.

Practitioners are accountable to the standards of their regulatory bodies, you can check their registration and they must hold indemnity insurance for the treatments and services they provide.

Useful resources:

British Association of Sclerotherapists

www.bassclerotherapy.com



Compression hosiery

www.daylong.co.uk



Summary Checklist

What to expect

- ✓ To have a face to face consultation with a prescribing practitioner prior to treatment
- ✓ To have enough time to consider all the information- avoid making hasty decisions
- ✓ A follow up appointment if necessary or desired

Ask questions

- ✓ What is this treatment/product?
- ✓ How does it work?
- ✓ What are the side effects/risks?
- ✓ What are the alternatives I might consider?
- ✓ What results can I expect?
- ✓ What will I look like immediately after?
- ✓ How long will the results last?
- ✓ How many treatments will I need and in what time frame?
- ✓ Are you able to treat complications, should they occur?
- ✓ What happens if I am not happy with the result?
- ✓ Is it painful? How do you minimise pain?
- ✓ What aftercare am I expected to perform?
- ✓ What will it cost and what are the payment terms?

What to check

- ✓ Check the qualifications of a Doctor www.gmc-uk.org, Nurse www.nmc-uk.org, Dentist www.gdc-uk.org and Prescribing Pharmacist www.pharmacyregulation.org
- ✓ Ask to see the unopened box of product/medicine to be used and make a note of it for future reference, should you later see another practitioner.

Be Safe

- ✓ Do not proceed with treatment if you do not feel comfortable with the practitioner
- ✓ Do not proceed with treatment if you do not fully understand the information you are given
- ✓ Take the necessary time to make your decisions
- ✓ Make a note of the practitioner's name and product used for future reference
- ✓ Ask for copies of before and after photographs for your reference
- ✓ Do not have treatment in your home, at 'parties' or exhibitions or in environments that are clearly not clean or appropriate