

Sclerotherapy

Frequently Asked Questions

Before treatment

Do I need these veins and how would the blood get back if you remove these veins? Varicose veins and spider veins are faulty superficial (surface) veins that do not function properly. Once they are removed, your blood circulation will improve. Most people with varicose veins have healthy deep veins that function correctly (returning blood to the heart). In presence of varicose veins, deep veins have to work harder to drain the leg. By removing faulty veins, there is less pressure on the deep veins to perform.

Are there any travel restrictions? If you are only having your small blue veins treated, there is no travel restriction. If you are having larger varicose veins treated, you cannot travel long distances (more than 5 hours) 4 weeks either side of treatment. This means if you have just come back from overseas, you need to wait 4 weeks before treatment can commence. If you need to travel by car, you need to have multiple breaks so you can go for a walk. This will stimulate blood flow and prevent deep vein thrombosis. You should wear your stockings while you travel.

Can I have treatment if I am pregnant? No. Treatment can be started or resumed after pregnancy and breast-feeding.

During treatment

Can I exercise during my treatments? Walking is very good for the veins as it helps the calf muscle to pump the blood in the deep veins back to the heart. We recommend a walking regime of 30 minutes per day. Vigorous activities such as running and heavy weights should be restricted for 2 weeks after treatment, depending on the type of treatment. However, if your exercise is for rehabilitation it is OK for you to continue with this.

When will the veins disappear? The clearance of leg veins takes time. In fact, the injected veins may initially look worse. It does take a couple of months to a year for the dead veins to disappear completely. Residual marks and staining of the skin can also take months to disappear, so you need to be patient.

Can you treat my spider veins only and leave the varicose veins? This is not recommended. In most cases, varicose and larger blue (reticular) veins feed the spider veins. You have to work on the foundation first – by treating the larger veins – before the smaller ones! If not, the spider veins may not clear and you have a greater risk of developing complications.

Can I have treatment close to a major operation? Discuss this with your doctor. It is best to allow a break of a month either side of sclerotherapy.

Can I see a physiotherapist/chiropractor/osteopath for treatment whilst undergoing treatment for my veins? Yes, but do keep in mind that the treated leg veins may still be sensitive to pressure and manipulation.

Can I take the Pill / HRT? Female hormones have been reported to increase the possibility of complications such as thrombosis and matting (red discoloration). Some practitioners insist on stopping the Pill/ HRT several weeks before treatment while others will allow healthy, active females to continue with modern low-dose Pill / HRT.

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During treatment, cont.

Can I take aspirin or anti-inflammatory drugs? It is best to stop over-the-counter aspirin or anti-inflammatories (Nurofen, Naprosyn, Voltaren, etc) a week before treatment to minimise bruising and bleeding. If they are prescribed for a medical condition, it is ok to continue with them.

Can I take Iron tablets, vitamins, Chinese herbs, supplements, or fish oil? Iron tablets should be stopped 1–2 weeks prior to your treatment to minimise potential staining of the skin. Vitamin E, fish oil and certain herbs may cause more bleeding and bruising (like aspirin). You can re-commence taking these when all your treatments are completed.

Can I apply cream to my legs? Yes.

Can I wax or shave my legs? Shaving is OK but waxing should be avoided for a week after treatment.

Can I take antibiotics while having treatment? Yes, there is no interaction between antibiotics and the treatments offered.

After treatment

What are the small lumps that appear on the legs after sclerotherapy? After vein treatment, small tender lumps (trapped blood) may develop along the injected vein. The lumps will be tender to touch, which is normal. These are not dangerous clots and are of no concern. The doctor may choose to release these on your next visit. Any pain or discomfort will settle down when the doctor has released the trapped blood.

Will all spider veins disappear when you have finished treating the varicose veins? The spider veins often improve but will not totally clear. The spider veins will clear with further treatment directed at these small vessels.

Can I sunbake, go to sauna or have hot showers? Sunbaking is bad for the skin and may worsen capillaries. Hot saunas and very hot showers can dilate veins and capillaries making them look and feel worse (they do not cause the veins).

Will the veins come back? In 80% of cases, treated veins do not come back as they are dissolved and absorbed by the body. New abnormal veins, however, may appear in time due to genetic, hormonal and environmental factors. Periodic ultrasound maps and treatment may be required to maintain healthy legs. For most patients with genetic leg veins, control rather cure is the realistic aim.

I have veins on my face, what type of treatment do I need? Laser treatment is best for facial veins and capillaries. Please speak to your doctor about this.

When can I resume my regular exercise? Most people can resume their usual (vigorous) exercise 2–3 weeks after treatment, depending on the comfort level (the treated leg may still be sensitive with prolonged and vigorous exercise).

Compression Stockings

The recommended timeframe for wearing compression stockings following each sclerotherapy treatment:

A: Micro Ultrasound Guided Sclerotherapy (MUGS)
= 1 week (minimum)

B: Ultra Sound Guided Sclerotherapy (UGS)
and EndoVenous Laser Ablation (EVLA)
= 2 weeks (minimum)

It is okay to extend the stocking time for additional support to the leg(s) if desired.

Wear the stocking to bed on the first night following treatment. Thereafter the stocking(s) should be worn only during the day and can be removed at bedtime. You can also remove them for showers. Make sure that showers are brief (less than 5 minutes) and not too hot. Short lukewarm showers are best.