

Sclectherapy

What is sclerotherapy?

Sclerotherapy is a popular method of eliminating varicose veins & superficial telangiectasia's ("spider veins"). A solution, called a sclerosing agent, is injected into the veins to break down the vein wall.

Does sclerotherapy work for everyone?

The majority of individuals who receive sclerotherapy treatment will be cleared of their varicosities or have visible improvement. However, there is no guarantee that sclerotherapy will be effective in every case. Approximately 10% of patients who undergo sclerotherapy have poor to fair results. ("Poor results" indicating that the veins have not disappeared after six treatments.) In extremely rare cases, the patient's condition may become worse after sclerotherapy treatment.

How many treatments will I need?

The number of treatments needed to clear or improve varicose veins differs for each person. The number of treatments can range from 1 to 6, with the average number being 3 or 4. Individual veins usually require 1 to 3 treatments.

What are the most common side effects?

- Itching: You may experience mild itching along the vein route. This normally last 1-2 days.
- Transient Hyperpigmentation: Approximately 30% of all patients who undergo sclerotherapy notice a light brown discoloration after treatment. Nearly all patients notice a darkening of the vein immediately after the procedure. In rare instances the darkening may persist for 4 to 12 months.
- Sloughing: Sloughing occurs in less than 3% of patients who have received sclerotherapy. Sloughing consists of a small, slowly healing ulceration at the injections site. A blister may form, open, and become ulcerated. The scar that follows should return to a normal color.
- Allergic Reactions: Very rarely a patient may have an allergic reaction to the sclerosing agent. This risk is greater in patients who have a history of allergic reactions.
- Pain: A few patients may experience moderate to severe pain and some bruising around the injection site. The veins may be tender to touch after the treatment and an uncomfortable sensation may be felt along the vein route. This pain is usually temporary lasting only 1 to 7 days.

What are other side effects?

Other side effects include a burning sensation during injection of the solution, neovascularization (the temporary development of new, tiny blood vessels), transient phlebitis reactions (temporary swelling of the vein may cause the ankle to swell), temporary superficial blebs (similar to hives), and very rarely wound infection, poor healing, or scarring.

Phlebitis is a very rare complication, seen in approximately 1 out of every 1,000 patients who have been treated for veins greater than 3 or 4mm in diameter. The dangers of phlebitis include the possibility of pulmonary embolus (a blood clot in the lungs) and postphlebotic syndrome, in which the blood is not carried out of the legs, resulting in permanent swelling of the legs.

What are the possible complications if I do not have sclerotherapy?

In cases of large varicose veins (greater than 3 to 4mm in diameter), spontaneous phlebitis and/or thrombosis may occur with the associated risk of possible pulmonary emboli. Additionally, large skin ulcerations may develop in the ankle region of patients with long-standing varicose veins with underlying venous insufficiency. Rarely these ulcers may hemorrhage or become cancerous.

Are there other types of procedures to treat large varicose veins & telangiectasia's?

Yes, there are other procedures, such as vein stripping & ligation that may be used to treat varicose veins. This generally requires 1 to 3 week hospital stay and is performed under general anesthesia. Risks of vein stripping or ligation include permanent nerve paralysis in up to 30% of patients and possible pulmonary emboli, infection, and permanent scarring. General anesthesia has some associated risks, including the possibility of serious harm, paralysis, brain damage, and death.