

## INJECTION MICROSCLEROTHERAPY TREATMENT FOR SPIDER VEINS

### Patient Information

#### **What are spider veins?**

Spider veins are like varicose veins but smaller. They are also closer to the surface of the skin than varicose veins. Often, they are red, blue or purple. They can look like tree branches or spider webs with their short, jagged lines. They can be found on the legs and face and can cover either small or large areas of skin. The medical term for them is *telangiectasia*.

#### **What causes spider veins?**

Spider veins can be caused by hormonal changes, sun damage or local injury. They can also occur as a result of larger underlying varicose veins which are not always visible. It is important that spider veins are fully investigated using ultrasound to identify the incompetent valves within veins the cause varicose veins, as failure to treat these usually results in early recurrence of spider veins and a poor cosmetic outcome.

#### **What is injection micro sclerotherapy and how does it work?**



Before

After multiple treatments

Injection microsclerotherapy is a treatment for spider veins which involves injecting a chemical substance called “sclerosant” using fine needles. The sclerosant irritates the inner wall of the veins and causes them to become inflamed; the vein walls then stick together and the vein disappears.

The sclerosant used is sodium tetradecyl sulphate or “fibro-vein”, which has been used in the treatment of varicose and spider veins since 1946.

#### **Am I suitable for Micro sclerotherapy?**

Injection micro sclerotherapy treatment is not suitable if a patient is/has:

- Unable to walk due to any cause.
- Currently taking oral contraceptives (Ideally this should be stopped one month before commencing treatment, as it could slightly increase the risk of a deep vein thrombosis).
- Currently pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Very overweight (obese).
- Experiencing acute inflammation with/ or without blood clot formation (phlebitis/superficial thrombophlebitis) in the vein to be treated.
- A history of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE).
- An allergy to the sclerosant (sodium tetradecyl sulphate or “fibro-vein”).
- An infection in the skin on the area to be treated.

- An infection throughout the body (systemic infection), such as a virus or a cold.
- Diabetes that is not well controlled.
- Significant heart disease.
- Significant peripheral arterial disease.
- Significant kidney disease.
- Varicose veins which require surgical/endovenous intervention.
- Varicose veins caused by pelvic/abdominal tumours.
- Currently on medication to thin the blood (e.g. Warfarin).

### **How many treatments will I need?**

The number of treatments needed depends on the size and extent of the veins. Several injections in to the veins of one or both legs can be performed at each session, however the amount of sclerosant that can be injected in a single treatment will limit the number of injections you can have. If only a small number of spider veins are to be treated, sometimes only two or three treatments will be adequate. More extensive or prominent varicose veins may require a series of treatment sessions in order to reach the desired result.

Your consultant will advise you on the number of treatments you are likely to need.

### **How long does the treatment take?**

Depending on the size of the area and number of veins to be treated, the treatment can take from 20 to 40 minutes. We advise that you leave 6 weeks between each treatment session in order for the results of each treatment to be clear.

### **Does it hurt?**

The injections do tend to sting slightly but they are rarely painful, as only fine needles are used during the treatment. Some people do experience a burning sensation immediately after the treatment, but this usually only lasts a few seconds.

### **Are there any special after-care instructions?**

Following the treatment, you will be given a pair of compression stockings which you need to wear continuously (day and night) for the first week, and then during the day only for a further 7 days. The compression stockings help to prevent the treated veins from refilling. The compressions stockings need to be kept dry. We advise that you avoid hot baths, direct sun exposure and strenuous exercise for 2 weeks.

### **How quickly does the treatment work?**

The treated areas may feel slightly sore and itchy for a few days. It is normal for there to be bruising at the injection sites; if you have had multiple injections the bruising can be extensive and may take several weeks to resolve. The veins themselves tend to appear worse and darker after treatment, but this will fade slowly. It is not uncommon for the skin over the treated area to develop brown discolouration or staining that may be permanent.

### **What should I expect from the treatment?**

By having a duplex ultrasound assessment of your leg veins at your initial consultation, we are able to exclude underlying incompetent or varicose veins. Although treated veins usually disappear, it can take a long time and you may develop new thread veins in the future.

Most patients are pleased with the overall results of micro sclerotherapy. Approximately 80% of patients are pleased, 10% satisfied and 10% unhappy with the results of treatment.

Our consultants recommend at least 2 treatments for an area of thread veins before any improvement can be seen. It is possible that you may only require one session of treatment; however, this is all dependent on the number and severity of veins. It may take a number of repeat treatments before reaching your desired look.

### **Is the treatment safe?**

The procedure is carried out by experienced vascular surgeons. The sclerosant has been safely used for varicose and spider veins for many years. However, as with any medical treatment, it is not entirely without risk.

### **What are the potential risks or side effects?**

- Immediately after the treatment, you may experience slight swelling, redness and itchiness over the injection sites.
- Bruising is common and can be quite extensive, taking 3-4 weeks to resolve.
- Brown/reddish staining or discolouration can occur, and can persist even after the veins have disappeared. Although this staining tends to fade over time, it may not completely disappear. The staining generally becomes darker when exposed to sun light, so we advise that you avoid sun exposure unless a total sun block (SPF 50+) can be applied to the treated area.
- Some patients may develop a small painful lump at the site of an injected vein, particularly if a large vein has been treated. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. Brufen) may help to relieve these symptoms, in addition to wearing the compression stockings provided.
- Occasionally, a small ulcer may develop at the injection site as a result of the sclerosant leaking under the skin. This may be sore, take a few weeks to heal and may leave a small white scar.
- Generalised allergic reactions to the chemicals used during the injections can occur but are extremely rare.
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) associated with injection micro sclerotherapy is rare.
- *Telangiectasia matting* – This is a rare complication associated with micro sclerotherapy treatments and describes the formation of new very fine spider veins. These veins typically arise on the inside of the knee and the outside of the thigh, and look different to original spider veins as they appear similar to a bluish or red bruise. These veins can develop several months after treatment, and often disappear without requiring further treatment within 6-12 months. If these veins do not go away, they may be treated by a particular type of laser treatment, which is offered at this clinic.

### **CONTRAINDICATIONS**

Injection micro sclerotherapy treatment is not suitable if you have any of the following:

- Unable to walk due to any cause.
- Currently taking oral contraceptives (Ideally this should be stopped one month before commencing treatment, as it could slightly increase the risk of a deep vein thrombosis).
- Currently pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Very overweight (obese).
- Experiencing acute inflammation with/or without blood clot formation (phlebitis/superficial thrombophlebitis) in the vein to be treated.
- A history of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE).
- An allergy to the sclerosant (sodium tetradecyl sulphate or “fibrovein”).
- An infection in the skin on the area to be treated.
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- Diabetes that is not well controlled.

- Significant heart disease.
- Significant peripheral arterial disease.
- Significant kidney disease.
- Varicose veins which require surgical/endovenous intervention.
- Varicose veins caused by pelvic/abdominal tumours.
- Currently on medication to thin the blood (e.g. Warfarin).

## **Pre and Post Treatment Instructions**

Please ensure that you adhere to the following instructions in order to obtain optimum results from your injection microsclerotherapy treatment:

### **PRE-TREATMENT**

- Please do not use bath oils, lotions or creams on your leg(s) for 24 hours before your treatment.
- Make sure that you have had something to eat and drink on the day of your treatment.
- Please dress in loose clothing, jogging bottoms or a skirt and comfortable shoes when you come for your treatment.

### **POST TREATMENT**

- Depending on the size of the area treated a wool and crepe dressing may be applied. This is to be worn for 2-3 hours to allow the small entry points seal from the small needles used to injection the sclerosant.
- Your legs may feel sore after treatment due to inflammation of the small veins. Over time, this will fade.
- No strenuous exercise (e.g. aerobics, running, lifting weights etc.) for two weeks.
- Avoid waxing or shaving the treated area for two weeks.
- Avoid hot baths for two weeks following your treatment; it is advised that you shower rather than take a bath during this time. Avoid scrubbing the skin over the treated area, or applying shower gel or soap directly to this area.
  - Do not apply body lotion or creams to the treated area for one week.
  - Avoid sunbathing (including artificial tanning on a sunbed) or using a sauna for four weeks.
    - Do not disturb, lift or pick any scabs that may form on the skin.

### **Follow-up appointment**

- We will look to book you in for a face-to-face follow up appointment with your consultant.

### **Out of hours Care**

- If you require medical attention or advice outside of our clinic hours, please call NHS 111 for further advice. Encase of emergencies, please call 999.