

Injection sclerotherapy



Information for patients
Sheffield Vascular Institute



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



You have been diagnosed as having varicose veins that are suitable for injection sclerotherapy. This leaflet explains more about injection sclerotherapy, and answers some of the most frequently asked questions. If, after reading it, you have any questions or concerns, you should write them down and discuss them at your next appointment.

Where will my hospital appointments take place?

Your appointments will usually be at the Sheffield Vascular Institute at the **Northern General Hospital**. We also run local outpatient clinics at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Rotherham and Barnsley District General.

Sheffield Vascular Institute is a large vascular centre specialising in the treatment of all circulatory conditions affecting the arteries, veins and lymphatics. If you wish to find out more about the Sheffield Vascular Institute, please look under the Guide to Services section of the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust website:

www.sth.nhs.uk

How does it work?

Injection sclerotherapy is usually suitable only for relatively small varicose veins. It works by injecting a soap-based chemical (sclerosant) into the varicose vein which causes the vein to seal off so that it cannot fill with blood.

How is it done?

The treatment is usually performed in the Outpatient Department. Your specialist will examine the veins that need treatment and you may have some marks put on your legs. You will then be asked to lie down on a treatment couch, possibly on your front or side depending where the veins are. Your specialist may sometimes use an ultrasound scanner to identify the veins to be treated, and to ensure that the sclerosant is applied into it in the correct way.

Fine injections go directly into the veins that need treating. Sometimes this can sting. The injection is of sclerosant, the liquid which destroys the vein. Sometimes small pads are applied over the injection to apply more pressure.

Usually an elastic bandage will be applied to your leg, which gives the compression to allow the treatment to work. After four days this can be changed over to a compression stocking that is worn for a further one week until the vein heals.

Occasionally, a compression stocking will be applied straight away if a small area only has been treated.

What happens afterwards?

The injection site may sting afterwards. Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (Brufen) should help relieve any discomfort. Over the first few weeks after the injection, any slight discomfort, hardness or tenderness at the site(s) should subside.

Please take a short walk as soon as possible after the injection, as this will help to clear any remaining sclerosant from the leg.

Please **do not** drive yourself home from the clinic. Either arrange for somebody to collect you or take a bus or taxi.

Are there any risks?

Whilst most patients experience no problems after injection sclerotherapy, a small number may experience one or more of the following:

- A persistent hard cord in the line of the vein.
- Brown staining of the skin in line with the vein.
- Thread veins may develop if you are prone to them.
- Rarely, ulceration of the skin at the injection site(s).
- Failure of the injection to obliterate the vein.

- Superficial thrombophlebitis:
Most people who have this treatment will experience some hard lumps within the veins treated. This is called superficial thrombophlebitis and is usually nothing to worry about, but is part of the treatment process. It is eased by anti-inflammatory painkillers or gel. These lumps gradually subside but this can take weeks or months.

- Brown pigmentation of the skin:
This is common following thrombophlebitis and can be permanent. However for most people it does fade over a period of months.

- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT):
If the injection passes into the deep veins there is a risk of DVT but this is rare.

- Allergy to the sclerosant
- Failure of the treatment to work, with some of the treated veins persisting or returning at a later stage.

Will I need to come back to hospital?

For most patients, one treatment of sclerotherapy is sufficient, but sometimes two or three sessions may be needed. Your specialist will advise you on this.

A follow up is not usually required, but sometimes the specialist may prefer to arrange for a follow up appointment.

How long before I can resume normal activities?

For the first 24 hours, rest as much as possible, sitting with your feet elevated above the level of the hips. Take a few short walks and try to avoid standing still for any length of time. You should expect to be able to return to work on the day after your treatment, but some patients may need more time off work if they have significant discomfort.

After 3 - 4 days you can remove the bandages and pads, and apply the stocking after a bath.

The stocking should be worn at all times during the day, and should also be kept on at night time.

The success of the injection treatment relies upon the pressure from the bandage or stocking applied to the injected area. You can stop wearing the stocking when the leg is completely comfortable on standing. We advise that you wear your stockings for a minimum of one week from the day of the procedure.

Is there any activity I should avoid doing?

You should not drive whilst the bandages and pads are in place as they may limit your ability to be in full control of the car.

You should not take a long-haul flight for one month.

Avoid exposing your leg to strong sunlight for a month or so as this increases the risk of skin staining.

What if I think there is something wrong when I get home?

If you think there is something wrong with your leg when you get home, contact the secretary of the consultant who performed the sclerotherapy for advice.

Contact numbers

Vascular Administration Co-ordinator

- **0114 271 5534**
Monday - Friday (8.00am - 4.00pm)

or

Vascular Nurse Specialists

- **0114 226 9311** or **0114 271 4688**
Monday - Friday
Please note: working hours are variable and include work outside the hospital



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