



## Sclerotherapy of Spider Veins

### What are spider veins?

Spider veins are formed by the dilation of a small group of blood vessels located close to the surface of the skin. Although they can appear anywhere on the body, spider veins are most commonly found on the face and legs. They usually pose no health hazard but may produce a dull aching in the legs after prolonged standing.

### Who develops spider veins?

The exact cause of spider veins is unknown, although heredity, pregnancy, and female hormones are believed to be contributing factors.

### What is sclerotherapy?

Sclerotherapy is an approved, successful treatment for spider veins. A solution is injected with a very small needle into the spider vein. The solution then washed over the tiny cells that line the inner wall of the blood vessel. The solution irritates the blood vessel wall causing injury and collapse. Eventually, those blood vessels disappear by disintegration.

Sclerotherapy requires **multiple sessions**. The treatment area should not be re-injected for four weeks to allow for complete healing, although other areas may undergo treatment during this time. Vessels slowly fade over a period of weeks or months. **Treated areas will look worse before they look better, bruising is common.**

### Do I need anything special?

Do not use moisturizers on the day of treatment. You may eat a regular meal. You may be more comfortable wearing shorts for the treatment. After the treatment, your legs may be wrapped with ace wraps for up to 24 to 48 hours, or for maximum benefit, two weeks. You may walk, but should not do any strenuous aerobic activity for 48 hours after the procedure. Avoid hot tubs and hot baths for 48 hours. If you are experiencing any discomfort you may ice the area and/or take tylenol.

### Who should be treated?

Patients with thrombophlebitis with active infection, bleeding, or clotting disorders, poor circulation or those that are confined to bed should not be treated. Patients with a history of pulmonary embolism, clots in the legs, or a history of extreme swelling of the feet or legs should not be treated. Please inform your provider if you have asthma or are taking blood thinners such as aspirin, Coumadin, or heparin.

**The most common side effects** experienced with sclerotherapy treatment are:

1. Itching. You may experience mild itching; this itching normally lasts one to two hours, but may persist for a day or so.

2. Pigmentation. Approximately 10% of patients who undergo sclerotherapy notice a discoloration of light brown streaks after treatment. In almost every patient, the veins become darker immediately after the procedure. In rare instances, this darkening of the veins may persist for 4 to 12 months.
3. Wound. Ulceration occurs in less than one percent of the patients who receive sclerotherapy. Ulceration consists of a sore at the injection site that heals slowly over one to two months. The scar that follows may be permanent. This usually represents injection into or near a small artery or skin and is not preventable. Report any sores on the skin to your provider immediately. Care is needed for proper healing.
4. Pain. A few patients may experience moderate pain and some bruising, usually at the site of injection. The veins may be tender to the touch after treatment. This pain is usually temporary, in most cases (lasting one to at most seven days).
5. Matting. This refers to the development of tiny new blood vessels in the area of the treatment and may cause the area to appear worse. It occurs in up to 18 percent of women on estrogen therapy and 2 to 4 percent of all patients.
6. Ankle swelling. This may occur in 2 to 5 percent of patients after treatment of blood vessels in the foot or ankle. It usually resolves in a few days and is lessened by wearing the support stockings.
7. Anaphylaxis. Systemic allergic reactions to sclerotherapy solution are extremely rare. They can manifest as lip swelling, shortness of breath and dizziness and can even result in death.

#### **CARE AFTER SCLEROTHERAPY**

1. Leave coban/ace wrap or support stockings in place for 48 hours. (You may remove them to shower and sleep).
2. As much as possible, elevate your legs when sitting or lying down for 48 hours following your treatment.
3. Wearing support stockings for 3 weeks when standing for prolonged periods of time may increase the success of treatment.
4. For 48 hours avoid: aerobic activity (walking is ok), hot tubs, long hot showers, and alcohol intake.
5. **Please report to your provider any problems or questions you have after treatment, no matter how small. Our office phone: (720) 728-7770.**