

Foam Sclerotherapy General Information

Patient information Leaflet

January 2020

Why do I need the Treatment?

Your doctor has diagnosed you with varicose veins in your leg(s). There are two systems of veins in the legs, deep and superficial. The deep system of veins run deep within the leg surrounded by muscle, and the superficial system runs in the layer of fat just below the surface of the skin.

Throughout the veins there are small delicate valves which allow the blood flow to go upwards only (towards the heart). When these valves no longer work blood is allowed to flow backwards down the vein which causes high pressure when standing. The high pressure leads to the widened bulging appearance of the vein in the superficial system.

Varicose veins may cause aching, swelling, itching, discomfort and heaviness in the legs which isn't medically serious.

In some people the high pressure in the veins causes damage to the skin near the ankle which can become brown in colour often with scarred white areas. A red skin rash can also develop. If such changes are allowed to progress or the skin is injured, an ulcer may result. Such changes are a good reason to have treatment for varicose veins.

What Is Foam Sclerotherapy?

Foam sclerotherapy is performed by forcibly mixing a solution known as sodium tetradecyl sulphate with air. This procedure turns the liquid into foam that is like the consistency of shaving foam.

Then using a small needle the foam is injected directly into the visible varicose vein. The foam then irritates and causes inflammation to the lining of the vein and in response the vein collapses.

The nurse will then monitor the travel of the foam with the ultrasound scanner at either or both junctions (groin or behind the knee).

Once the foam is at the junction of the deep and superficial veins, (either behind the knee or in the groin) the nurse will use the probe to compress the vein gently. This will stop the foam going into deep vessels.

A light bandage and padding will then be applied to help compress the vein.

A light compression stocking from toe to knee will be applied over the top of the bandage.

This has to remain in place for one week. This is an important part of the treatment as the stocking encourages the circulation and can provide support to the vein whilst the injection continues to work.

After a week, you can take the stocking off the night before and hand wash it. Do not machine wash or tumble dry.

The next day you may remove the bandage, padding and tape and have a normal bath or shower.

You then re-apply the stocking. The stocking should be applied every morning, worn all day and then removed before you go to bed. You do not go to bed in the stocking after the first week of continuous wear.

Make sure there are no wrinkles in the stocking and that you do not over stretch the stocking.

What Are The Benefits?

A reduction in the varicose veins and often their symptoms.

Are There Any Risks Involved?

Complications of foam sclerotherapy can include a brown line along the length of the vein.

This may fade over time, however this sometimes never fades.

Short term side effects include stinging and tingling sensations up the leg after the injection.

This should settle after a few hours.

Other rare side effects include disturbed vision, blood clots and an ulcer at the site of injection.

A common side effect of the procedure is redness and hardness along the length of the vein.

This is often painful to touch and usually occurs a few weeks after the procedure. Plenty of walking, painkillers and wearing the compression stockings are the best treatment for this.

What Are The Alternatives?

The common operation for varicose veins is where a small cut is made in the groin or behind the knee and other small cuts are made along the length of the prominent vein to remove the protruding veins. This operation involves a general anaesthetic.

Another alternative is to wear compression stockings: this will relieve aching in the legs but will not remove the varicose veins.

Some other centres are using lasers, heat probe and metal clips to close the veins, but we do not offer such treatments at present.

The consequences of not treating varicose veins are that they may become worse.

They may have no significant change.

Before the Treatment

Prior to having foam sclerotherapy you will be seen by a vascular specialist in the clinic to assess your suitability for the treatment and discuss the appropriate treatment for you. You may also be asked to fill in a questionnaire about your varicose veins. You may also have had an ultrasound scan of your veins to see where all the veins join up.

How Long Will I Be In Hospital For?

The procedure is performed in the Vascular Studies Unit. The procedure usually takes approximately 30 minutes and you do not have to stay in hospital after. The procedure involves no anaesthetic.

What Happens To Me When I Arrive At The Ward / Department?

On arrival to the Vascular Studies Unit, you will be seen by the vascular specialist nurse who may perform an ultrasound scan to map the vein and explain the procedure.

A scan will also be performed during the procedure to monitor the passage of the foam.

You will then be seen by a doctor who will ask you to sign a consent form.

On the Day of the Procedure / During the Procedure

Inform us of any important current medications and inform us of any allergies.

You do not need to starve for this procedure.

You may eat and drink as normal and take any regular medications at normal times.

What Happens After The Procedure?

You are advised to walk at least three miles a day whilst the bandage is on. You may need to take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (if you are able to take them), until the pain settles.

The stocking needs to be worn daily after the first week for at least 8-12 weeks. After approximately 3-4 months you should get an appointment in the post to see one of the vascular specialists in clinic. This is to see if the foam has been successful.

If the varicose vein is large or scattered throughout the lower leg then you may require more than one injection.

Discharge Arrangements

You are free to go once the procedure is complete and the bandage and stocking is in place. You will not require a district nurse visit as no stitches are used.

The Vascular team will review how successful the procedure has been in clinic. You can discuss with them if you require further treatment or if the other leg requires treatment.

No take home medications are required.

Day To Day Living

You are advised to resume your usual daily living activities straight away. You have to find an alternative to bathing and showering for the first week whilst the bandage is in place.

You can return to work the next day.

You can drive the next day.

If There Is A Problem

Contact the Vascular Studies Unit on 0161 922 6413 if you have any problems following the procedure.

Other Useful Contacts Or Information

The Vascular Studies Unit, 0161 922 6413.
The Vascular Consultants Secretaries 0161 922 6529
The Patient / Health Information Centre: 0161 922 5332

Source Of Good Practice

The Vascular Society website has been consulted to compile this information leaflet.
If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use this space below to remind you.

If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

Language, Interpretation and Patient Support Service (LIPS):

If you require an interpreter to assist your appointment, please ask an appropriate family member to contact our central booking office between **Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm** on **0161 922 6991** to arrange this for you. Further information can be found on the Trust public website <https://www.tamesidehospital.nhs.uk/patients/lips.htm>

語言翻譯及病者支持服務 (LIPS):

如果閣下需要翻譯員在您的預約當日幫助您的話 請找一名合適的家庭成員 **0161 922 6991** 聯絡本中央預約辦事處來您您安排 我們的辦公時間是星期一至星期五 上午 8 時至下午 5 時

Językowo Tłumaczeniowa Usługa Pomocy dla Pacjenta (*Language, Interpretation and Patient Support Service* LIPS):

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy tłumacza w trakcie swojej wizyty, proszę poprosić odpowiedniego członka rodziny o skontaktowanie się z Centralnym Biurem Zamówień (*Central Booking Office*), w celu zorganizowania tłumacza pomiędzy poniedziałkiem a piątkiem w godzinach od 08:00 - 17:00 pod numerem **0161 922 6991**.

لیٹوئج، انٹرپریٹیشن اینڈ پیٹینٹ سپورٹ سروس (Lips)

اگر آپ کو اپنی اپائنٹمنٹ کے لئے مترجم کی مدد کی ضرورت ہو تو براہ مہربانی اپنے خاندان کے کسی موزوں فرد سے کہیں کہ وہ ہمارے سنٹرل بکنگ آفس سے پیر سے جمعہ 8.00 بجے صبح سے 5.00 بجے شام کے دوران 0161 922 6991 پر فون کر کے اس کا بندوبست کریں۔

Help us to help you

It is important that we keep your records up-to-date. If the information about you is incorrect, we may be unable to contact you should we need to inform you about any changes to your appointment. Therefore, if you change your GP/Dentist, address or telephone number, please contact us as soon as possible. Please provide a mobile number where possible as we operate an appointment reminder service via text message.

Document control information

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