



Treatment of Spider Veins of the Legs (Sclerotherapy)

1. What is used?

Polidocanol 0.5-5% solution.

2. How does it work?

The solution works by drying out the tiny cells which line the blood vessels.

3. What are the side effects?

- a. 95% of patients have no side effects. Slight stinging can sometimes be felt when the solution is being injected.
- b. Pigmentation. Occasionally a small freckle-like pigmentation can occur. This usually fades but may rarely persist indefinitely at the injection site. With good technique, this rarely occurs with small spider veins. It has a higher risk of occurring with treatment of the larger veins.
- c. Bruising. Occasionally when the vessels are very weak, bruising can result which usually only lasts 1-2 weeks.
- d. Sometimes a clot can develop at the injection site. This clot will never cause any internal problems, but its removal within 2 weeks of the injection will speed up the healing process.
- e. Swelling is occasionally noted. It is particularly common when patients have jobs in which they stand for long periods of time or in which vessels in the ankles or lower portion of the leg are involved. The swelling is never dangerous, but occasionally must be treated with elevation and compression dressings.
- f. Superficial thrombophlebitis. This is an irritation of the vessels closest to the skin. It sometimes must be treated with anti-inflammatory agents, moist heat and elevation. This probably occurs in less than 1 case per 1000. Deep vein thrombosis, the condition that can lead to blood clots in the lungs, is essentially never seen after sclerotherapy for spider veins.
- g. Very rarely, an ulceration may form at the site of injection. This heals with a small scar.

4. How soon will the vessels disappear?

Each vessel may require 1 to 3 injections. Usually the vessels disappear over a period of 8-12 weeks. You must be patient. This is a gradual process. Also, this treatment does not prevent new veins from developing.

5. How much does it cost? The cost is related to the amount of time spent.

The usual session is 20 minutes long.

6. How often can I be treated?

It is preferable not to reinject the same areas until after 4-6 weeks.

7. How should I dress for the procedure?

Wear a loose pair of shorts. We do provide shorts if you do not bring your own.

8. Do I need to prepare my legs for the procedure?

Do not use a moisturizer or oils on your legs the day of the procedure. Shaving your legs the day of the procedure is permitted but is entirely optional.

9. Are there any special instructions after the procedure?

Strenuous physical activity or prolonged periods of standing should be avoided for the first 24 hours after the procedure. Walking is allowed. Spot Band-Aids are applied to the treated areas and must be kept on for 3-5 hours after the treatment. For larger veins, support hose are sometimes recommended or an elastic bandage (wrap) may be applied by our nurse after the procedure.

10. Are there certain kinds of spider veins that cannot be treated?

Generally speaking, the larger the vein the more difficult it is to eradicate. Large, bulging, “ropey” varicose veins may require surgery by a vascular surgeon, once the veins have been studied by ultrasound. Small vessels on the face, trunk, and arms are better treated with photoderm or electrosurgery (which can be done during a regular office visit).

11. Is there any way to prevent these veins?

The use of support hose may be helpful. Reducing your weight and exercising may also help. No one knows why these veins exist, but certain families seem predisposed, particularly the female relatives. Also mechanical trauma, falls, blows, long periods of standing or sitting, as well as pregnancy and hormones may play a role.

12. Will my insurance reimburse me for this procedure?

This procedure is considered cosmetic by most insurance companies. Payment is expected at the time of service.