



# New Ways to Treat Varicose Veins.

Surgical treatment used to be the only way to treat varicose veins successfully. Done under general anaesthesia and requires a week off work for recovery. In the last few years minimally invasive treatments have been developed. These can be performed under local anaesthetic followed by a swift return to normal activity. The London Vein Institute now offers modern methods of treatment to all patients.

## Causes of Varicose Veins

In normal veins, blood travels towards the heart with the direction of flow controlled by a complex system of delicate venous valves. In the leg the calf muscles help to return blood on its uphill journey back to the heart. In varicose veins the valves in the surface veins fail allowing blood to flow back towards the feet (known as reflux). The surface veins increase in size with the unusually fast downward flow and can be seen as a set of lumps and bumps along the leg. Inherited factors are important in the development of varicose veins, although our western way of life with sedentary lifestyle and diet probably also contribute.

## Management of varicose veins.

Not all varicose veins need to be treated. Some don't cause any problem or symptom and can be left untreated or managed with elastic stockings.

## Duplex ultrasound scan

This is a painless test which is done by vascular surgeons to find out what is happening in the arteries and veins of the leg. In people with varicose veins it is important to find the source of the problem. The ultrasound scan helps the surgeon decide which treatments are best to use and which veins need attention.

## Surgical treatment - Traditional method

This is done under a general anaesthetic as a day case; the surgeon makes small incisions at the groin, the inside of the knee and over varicose veins. The faulty vein is snipped and pulled out. One or two stitches may be needed. You will feel sore and bruised for a week or more and will need to wear a firm surgical stocking for two weeks afterwards. You are encouraged to walk around after surgery to help the circulation and to stop the limb becoming stiff.

**Best for:** larger size veins.

All tributaries can be removed at the same time by multiple phlebectomies (hooking the vein out through 1 mm incisions). Spider veins are NOT dealt with by surgery. They require microsclerotherapy some weeks after surgery.

## Ultrasound guided foam sclerotherapy

Fine needles are inserted into the varicose veins (usually three or four needles) under local anaesthetic. Next a foam sclerosant is injected into the needles. Most patients don't feel this at all. The sclerosant destroys the veins with minimal discomfort and you could get back to work immediately. A firm bandage needs to be work for several weeks. Several follow-up appointments are required. It may take a long time to settle.

**Best for:** large complex veins

## **Thread veins**

Spider veins, thread veins, broken veins and dermal flares are different names for the same fine, dilated veins within the skin. They may vary in size and colour from delicate pink lines to long, deep purple branches or thick bunches that look like a bruise. You probably inherit the tendency to get them but hormonal changes are also important since they commonly occur during pregnancy or during the menopause.

Microsclerotherapy is the most effective way of managing spider veins on the legs. In this treatment a chemical is injected which causes the vein walls to stick together, this takes about 2-4 weeks following treatment. A very fine needle is used which most people find causes only minor discomfort. Several injections are needed depending upon the number of veins and a number of sessions of treatment may be needed to get the best outcome. A compression stocking or bandage needs to be worn for 10 – 14 days.

## **Insurance companies and NICE**

All new vein treatments undertaken at the London Vein Institute have been considered and approved by NICE for use in the NHS. These have been widely used in many centres and are recognised as appropriate methods of management by experts in this field. The safety and efficacy of these methods has been established by extensive research. Our methods are recognised by medical insurance companies for the treatment of symptomatic varicose veins.

For further information and appointments please contact:



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