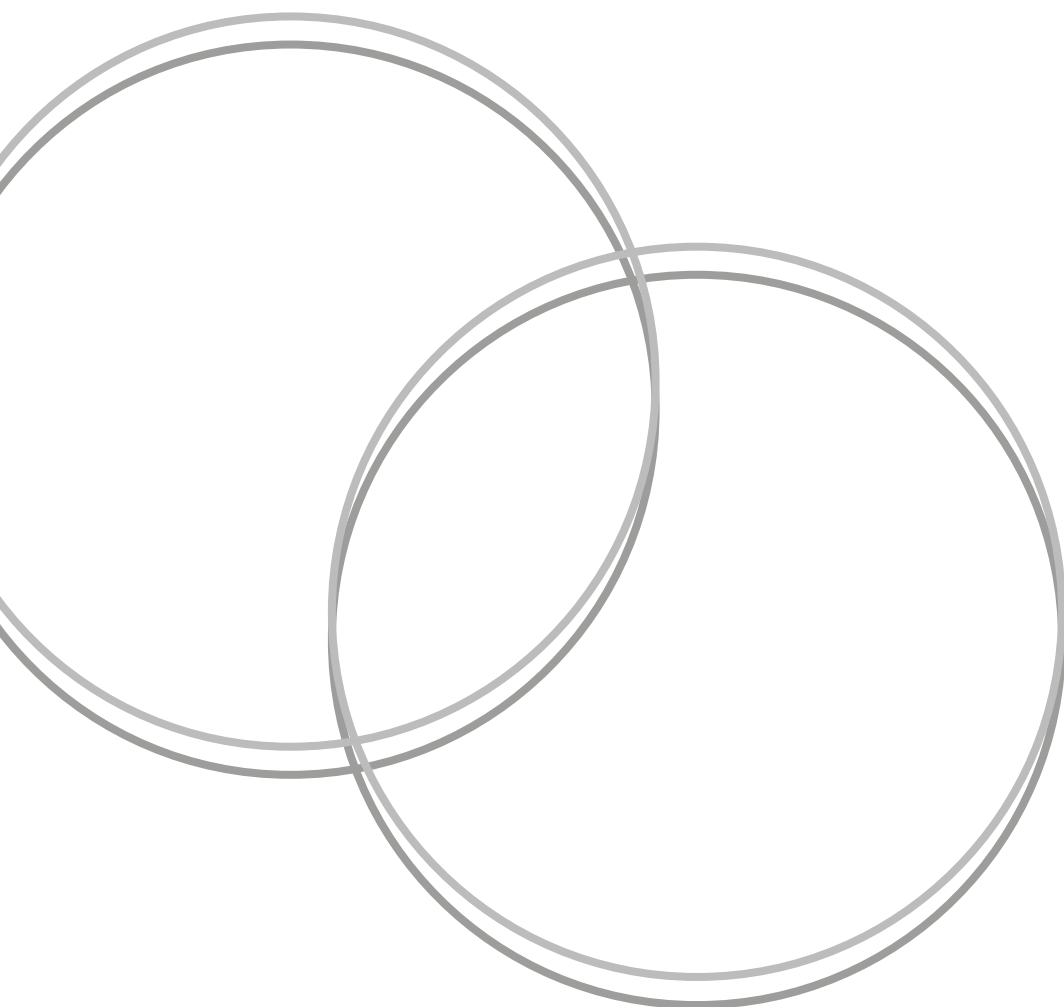


Ultrasound Guided Foam Sclerotherapy

Information for patients



What are varicose veins?

Varicose veins are enlarged, swollen, and twisting veins, often appearing blue or dark purple. They occur when the valves in the veins do not work properly, causing blood to flow backwards and pool in the vein. This can result in symptoms such as heaviness, aching, throbbing, itching, and fatigue in the legs.

How can foam sclerotherapy help?

Foam sclerotherapy helps by sealing the veins, causing them to shrink and block off. It involves injecting a foam made from a chemical mixed with air into the target vein through a small needle. This relieves symptoms such as heaviness, aching, throbbing, itching, and fatigue caused by varicose veins in the legs. Unlike traditional surgery for varicose veins, this procedure avoids the need for a general anaesthetic and skin incisions. Although other treatments like radiofrequency ablation exist, they may not be suitable for all veins. Your surgeon has recommended foam sclerotherapy to treat the faulty veins in your leg.

Do I need to do anything before treatment?

No specific preparation is required for foam sclerotherapy. If you are taking an anticoagulant such as warfarin, apixaban, or rivaroxaban, you do not need to stop your medication before the procedure unless specifically advised by your medical team. Please ensure you stay hydrated and have your usual breakfast on the day of the procedure.

Consent

The procedure will be explained to you beforehand. You will have the opportunity to ask questions before signing a consent form to confirm your agreement to proceed. You will receive a copy of the consent form for your records.

What happens during the treatment?

Typically, we treat one leg at a time. If both legs are affected, further treatment will be scheduled for several weeks later. The treatment usually takes place in a clinical setting and is performed by a Vascular Consultant, assisted by a Senior Doctor or a Vascular Specialist Nurse.

You will need to remove clothing from below the waist, except for your underwear. An ultrasound scan will locate the veins to be treated. The foam is then injected into one or two areas using small needles. This procedure takes about half an hour, depending on the number of injections needed.

After the injections, you will be fitted with a compression stocking up to your knee or thigh, depending on the treatment area. This stocking is crucial for pressing the vein walls together and must be worn continuously for the first 7 days and nights. Following this, wear the stocking during the day for another 1 to 2 weeks.

What should I expect after the treatment?

After the procedure, you will need to sit in the waiting room for 15 to 20 minutes to ensure there are no immediate side effects. Rarely, you may experience temporary visual disturbances or leg discomfort, so you should not drive for the rest of the day. Arrange for someone to take you home or use public transport. You should be able to drive the following day unless you still have symptoms.

Your leg may feel sore for a day or two post-procedure. It is important to stay mobile and walk regularly. Follow these guidelines:

- When not walking, try to keep your legs elevated on a stool when you sit down. **You can resume work as soon as you feel ready to do so (usually 24 to 48 hours later)**
- Avoid prolonged standing, kneeling, squatting, bending, and vigorous exercise (e.g., jogging, gym workouts, racquet sports) for 4 to 6 weeks.
- Avoid flying, especially long haul, for 4 to 6 weeks.
- Keep the treated areas dry while bandaged. After removing the stocking at 7 days, you can shower or bathe with the stocking on and then refit a dry stocking.

It is common to have some discomfort, tenderness, and lumpiness over the treated veins in your leg. Take your usual pain-relief medications such as **Paracetamol and Ibuprofen**. This will gradually get better over the next few weeks.

Potential side-effects to foam sclerotherapy you should be aware of:

- **Bruising:** Minimal bruising, if any, which usually disappears within a few weeks.
- **Skin Staining:** Affects approximately 10% of patients and may last up to a year or, in rare cases, be permanent. Daily application of Bio-Oil can help improve this. It is important to protect the brown staining from the sun as it is believed that this may make it permanent. **Avoid sunbathing initially after treatment, for four weeks after** micro sclerotherapy and for four months after foam sclerotherapy.
- **Thrombophlebitis:** Painful lumpiness along the treated vein, which usually settles within a few days with compression stocking use and painkillers.

Risk and complications

- **Transient Visual Disturbances:** Affect 1 in 200 people, similar to migraines, lasting 10 to 15 minutes. You will be monitored for 15 to 20 minutes post-procedure.
- **Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT):** Low risk (1.5%). Symptoms like leg swelling or excessive pain may indicate DVT, which carries a risk of pulmonary embolism. If you experience symptoms, contact your GP or NHS 111.

If you have any of the following symptoms below, speak to your GP or out-of-hours service (NHS 111) for advice:

- If your leg swells or becomes excessively painful after treatment, DVT carries a small risk of a pulmonary embolism (a blood clot travelling to the lungs), which can be serious. DVT is a potential rare complication following any treatment for varicose veins, and you will have a scan a few weeks after the treatment to check your deep veins.
- Temporary chest tightness, dry cough or headaches
- Rarely, myocardial infarction, seizures or transient ischaemic attacks.

Follow up appointments

A follow-up appointment will be scheduled 6 to 8 weeks after your treatment for an ultrasound scan of your treated leg. The Consultant will review the results and determine if further treatment is needed.

Useful information and support

Further information about varicose vein treatments is available on the NHS Choices website and the Circulation Foundation website:

NICE

Website: www.nice.org.uk

Circulation Foundation

Website: www.circulationfoundation.org.uk

For any questions before or after treatment, please contact the **Vascular Consultant secretary** at 01865 221 102.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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August 2024

Review: August 2027

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