

What Are Spider Veins?

Spider veins - known in the medical world as telangiectasias or sunburst varicosities - are small, thin veins that lie close to the surface of the skin. Although these super-fine veins are connected with the larger venous system, they are not an essential part of it.

A number of factors contribute to the development of spider veins, including heredity, pregnancy and other events that cause hormonal shifts, weight gain, occupations or activities that require prolonged sitting or standing, and the use of certain medications.

Spider veins usually take on one of three basic patterns. They may appear in a true spider shape with a group of veins radiating outward from a dark central point; they may be arborizing and will resemble tiny branch-like shapes; or they may be simple linear and appear as thin separate lines. Linear spider veins are commonly seen on the inner knee, whereas the arborizing pattern often appears on the outer thigh in a sunburst or cartwheel distribution.

Varicose veins differ from spider veins in a number of ways. Varicose veins are larger - usually more than a quarter-inch in diameter, darker in color and tend to bulge. Varicose veins are also more likely to cause pain and be related to more serious vein disorders. For some patients, sclerotherapy can be used to treat varicose veins. However, often surgical treatment is necessary for this condition.

The Best Candidates For Sclerotherapy

Women of any age may be good candidates for sclerotherapy, but most fall in the 30-to-60 category. In some women, spider veins may become noticeable very early on - in the teen years. For others, the veins may not become obvious until they reach their 40s.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you may be advised to postpone sclerotherapy treatment. In most cases, spider veins that surface during pregnancy will disappear on their own within three months after the baby is born. Also, because it's not known how sclerosing solutions may affect breast milk, nursing mothers are usually advised to wait until after they have stopped breastfeeding.

Spider veins in men aren't nearly as common as they are in women. Men who do have spider veins often don't consider them to be a cosmetic problem because the veins are usually concealed by hair growth on the leg. However, sclerotherapy is just as effective for men who seek treatment.

Preparing For the Procedure

You'll be instructed not to apply any type of moisturizer, sunblock or oil to your legs on the day of your procedure. You may want to bring shorts to wear during the injections, as well as your physician-prescribed support hose, and slacks to wear home.

When scheduling your procedure, keep in mind that your legs may be bruised or slightly discolored for some weeks afterward. You probably won't be comfortable wearing shorts, a swimsuit or a mini skirt until after your legs have cleared up a bit.

After Your Treatment

In addition to the compression tape applied during the procedure, tight-fitting support hose may be prescribed to guard against blood clots and to promote healing. The tape and cotton balls can be removed after 48 hours. However, you may be instructed to wear the support hose for 72 hours or more.

It's not uncommon to experience some cramping in the legs for the first day or two after the injections. This temporary problem usually doesn't require medication.

You should be aware that your treated veins will look worse before they begin to look better. When the compression dressings are removed, you will notice bruising and reddish areas at the injection sites. The bruises will diminish within one month. In many cases, there may be some residual brownish pigmentation which may take up to a year to completely fade.

Getting Back to Normal

Although you probably won't want to wear any leg-baring fashions for about two weeks, your activity will not be significantly limited in any other way from sclerotherapy treatment.

You will be encouraged to walk to prevent clots from forming in the deep veins of the legs. However, during the period of time to complete your treatment program, prolonged sitting and standing should be avoided, as should squatting, heavy weight lifting and "pounding" type exercises, including jogging.

A one-month healing interval must pass before you may have your second series of injections in the same site. After each treatment, you will notice further improvement of your legs' appearance.

Your New Look

Most patients are pleased with the difference sclerotherapy makes. The skin of your legs will appear younger, clearer and more healthy-looking. If you've been wearing long skirts and slacks to hide your spider veins, you'll now be able to broaden your fashion horizons. Often, patients are surprised at the dramatic difference in appearance between a treated leg and an untreated one.

Although sclerotherapy will obliterate the noticeable veins for good, it's important to remember that treatment will not prevent new spider veins from emerging in the future. As time passes, you may find that you need "touch-ups" or full treatments for new veins that surface. But even if you choose not to have further sclerotherapy, your legs will look better than if you never had treatment at all.

Sclerotherapy Absolute Contraindications

Pregnancy/Lactating
Advanced collagen vascular disease/Autoimmune disorders
Rheumatoid Arthritis/Crippling Osteoarthritis
Acute deep venous thrombophlebitis
Acute febrile illness
Anticoagulant therapy
Severe bronchial asthma
Debilitated individuals
Insulin dependent diabetic
corticosteroid Use
Hyper-Keloid formation
Severe Circulatory Problems (Cellulitis)
Diseases which severely interfere with Patient's mobility

Relative Contraindications

Acute superficial thrombophlebitis
Needle Phobia
Severe Obesity
Elderly
Non insulin Dependent Diabetic