

## **Endovenous laser therapy for varicose veins (EVL): patient information**

You have varicose veins which can be treated using Endovenous Laser Therapy or 'EVL'. This information sheet tells you about the procedure. Please read it carefully and ask your surgeon if you have any further questions or concerns. ***Once you have read the information please sign the attached form and bring the completed form with you when you attend for surgery as this will enable your treatment to proceed promptly.***

### **What is EVLT?**

EVL is a relatively new, minimally invasive treatment for varicose veins. It is one of the "endothermal" treatment methods recommended for patients with varicose veins by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), which assesses the safety and effectiveness of all new treatments. The size and shape of the varicose veins will determine whether we are able to treat you using EVLT. EVLT is performed under a local anaesthetic, and only requires a small wound to be made at around the level of the knee. A laser is used to obliterate (seal) the faulty vein, and you will be able to go home on the day of treatment.

### **What will happen during the treatment**

An ultrasound scan will be done on your leg to identify the veins to be treated. An injection will freeze the skin and a small flexible wire will be passed up inside the vein. A fine tube is passed over this wire and then the laser is threaded through the tube. The position of the laser will be checked again by ultrasound. The laser uses powerful energy to seal the vein up from the inside in just a few minutes. You should not feel anything during the treatment. Once the vein has been sealed up, the laser wire is removed and a bandage applied to the leg. This bandage should be kept on for 48 hours, and then a support stocking should be worn for a further 1-2 weeks. The surgeon carrying out the procedure will discuss how long they want you to wear the bandage after the procedure.

Sometimes in order to improve the results of your treatment the surgeon will also inject some of your veins with a foam solution designed to obliterate veins that cannot be treated with the laser. These injections can leave a brownish discolouration in place of the vein, but this almost always disappears within 12 months. Alternatively the more prominent veins may be removed under local anaesthetic, through small incisions in the skin (phlebectomies). Your surgeon will discuss this treatment with you at the time of your treatment if it was not discussed with you at the out-patient clinic.

### **What will happen after the treatment?**

After EVLT you will be asked to walk around for 15 minutes, have a drink and then go home. You should not drive, and if you are travelling for more than an hour from the

hospital you should sit on the back seat with your leg(s) up. Stop every hour and walk around for 5 minutes. You will be given a supply of painkillers to take home, and if you still have some discomfort after this time you may take paracetamol. Normal activity, including work, can be resumed as soon as you like, although contact sports, heavy exercise and swimming should be avoided for 1-2 weeks. When the bandage is taken off, you may see some bruising or hardness under the skin. This is quite normal and will gradually settle. You should wear the stocking during the day for up to 2 weeks, but may remove it at bedtime or for bathing depending on the advice you were given at the time of your treatment.

We will arrange to see you 6 weeks after your treatment, by which time most of the bruising and hardness will have settled. If any small varicose veins remain, these can be treated as an outpatient by injection.

### **What advantage does EVLT have over conventional surgery?**

EVLT is performed under a local anaesthetic, and is done as an outpatient procedure. Normal activity can be resumed straight away, and you should be able to return to work on the following day. EVLT requires less incisions in the skin, so leaves fewer scars and less potential for complications such as wound infection, or pain following surgery. Approximately 5% of patients who have conventional surgery are left with patches of numbness on the leg – this appears to be even less common with EVLT. Results so far suggest that EVLT is as good as or even better than surgery at treating varicose veins.

### **What are the potential complications?**

There is a chance the vein may not be obliterated by the laser (this occurs in about 3% of patients). If the procedure is not effective then it can be tried again, or the veins can be treated by conventional surgery. There may be a few visible varicose veins left after treatment, but these rarely cause symptoms and become less prominent with time. Most people do not require additional injection treatment for these residual veins, although if your veins have come back after traditional surgery there is a greater chance of requiring additional foam injections to complete your treatment.

A small number of patients have bruising or tenderness along the line of the treated veins that lasts for longer than 3 days, and this can feel like a “tightness” when bending or straightening the leg. If required, you may be prescribed some stronger painkillers for this, although the symptoms and tightness settle down over time. About 1% of patients experience some numbness in the leg after EVLT but this is almost always temporary.

As with any surgical procedure there is a small risk of blood clots forming in the main leg veins (DVT) although this is less common after EVLT than conventional surgery. Allergic reactions to the local anaesthetic used during the treatment can occur but are extremely rare. As already mentioned foam injections can leave a brownish stain that takes a while to fade.

### **Airline Travel**

Although the risk of blood clots is minimal with these keyhole techniques we do not advise patients to undertake long haul air travel within 6 weeks of the procedure. Short flights

may be acceptable, but if you have any doubts please contact your Consultant's secretary before attending for treatment.

**EVLT patient information: confirmation**

I (name) .....

Of (address) .....  
.....  
.....

Confirm that I have read and understood the information leaflet attached (endovenous laser therapy) and wish to proceed with the treatment as recommended by my consultant. In particular I have noted and accept the potential risks and complications as outlined in the form. Any further questions that I have regarding the treatment will be discussed with the surgeon immediately before the procedure.

Signed:..... Date:.....