

Advice to patients considering

## **THREAD VEIN INJECTIONS (MICROSCLEROTHERAPY)**

### **About the condition**

Thread veins (red veins/spider veins) of the legs is a common problem particularly affecting women. These small purple or red veins appear just below the skin, anywhere from the top of the thigh, to the ankle. They do not pose a serious health problem, but occasionally they are related to an underlying condition of the leg veins that can lead to varicose veins.

The cause of thread veins is unclear but they may run in families, or appear following leg injury, pregnancy, and other hormonal changes. Injection microsclerotherapy is a simple treatment that is often successful in correcting unwanted thread veins of the legs.

### **Are any tests required before treatment?**

A decision about treating your veins can usually be made after the Specialist has asked you some relevant questions, and performed an examination of your veins. This examination includes a special ultrasound test to check on whether or not you are likely to develop varicose veins, and the whole assessment usually takes no more than 20 minutes. Sometimes your veins may not be suitable for the injection treatment, and if this is the case the Specialist will advise you of the reasons for this, and any other treatment options.

### **About the treatment**

Using a syringe and a tiny needle, a small amount of solution is injected into the thread vein to empty it of blood. The solution causes the vein wall to become irritated and stick to itself, closing it shut and preventing it from filling up with blood again.

Sometimes a single injection will remove more than one vein, but it is common to need several injections to clear all the veins, and some veins may need injected on more than one occasion. The limit to the number of injections that you can have in a single treatment depends on the amount of solution injected, and in most cases you will require more than one treatment session.

Following the injections your legs will be placed in support stockings which you should wear continuously for 48 hours, day and night. After 48 hours the stockings can be removed and only worn during the daytime for a further 5-7 days.

The treatment is rarely painful, however some people experience a mild to moderate burning sensation immediately after the injection, but this usually only lasts a few seconds.

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## **Afterwards**

Following injection the thread veins will often appear red for a few days, and will then fade slowly. The vein may disappear completely within 4-8 weeks, but some areas may require further injections to obtain the best results.

An interval of 4–6 weeks between treatments to the same veins is recommended, but you can have treatment to other veins sooner than this.

There is no requirement to take any particular exercise after thread vein injection.

## **Are there any side effects or complications?**

While most patients experience no problems after injection of thread veins, there are some minor side effects reported. The commonest is slight swelling, redness, or bruising which occurs as a reaction to the injection. This occurs immediately after the injections but usually subsides over a few days.

Sometimes clotted blood gets trapped in the veins leaving a dark mark that may take several months to fade. It is frequently possible to speed up the disappearance of marks like these by removing the trapped blood from the vein with a syringe and needle when the blood softens 4-6 weeks after injections.

Occasionally a small dark area of pigmentation resembling a freckle may remain, or the vein may be replaced with a brownish stain in the line of the vein.

Allergic reactions to the chemical used to carry out the injections can occur but are extremely rare.

Very rarely the solution can leak out of the vein and cause ulceration of skin at the injection site that can lead to scarring, but every precaution is taken to prevent this from happening.

## **How good is the treatment?**

New thread veins can appear after treatment, and you will have been warned that not every visible vein will disappear as a result of your injections. This treatment has no effect on the development of varicose veins of the leg. Further thread veins can however be dealt with in the future if required.