

### Sclerotherapy for Varicose and Spider Veins

Sclerotherapy is a medical procedure used to eliminate [varicose veins](#) and [spider veins](#). Sclerotherapy involves an injection of a solution (generally a salt solution) directly into the vein. The solution irritates the lining of the blood vessel, causing it to swell and stick together, and the blood to clot. Over time, the vessel turns into scar tissue that fades from view.

Sclerotherapy is a proven procedure and has been in use since the 1930s.

### Candidates for Sclerotherapy

Prior to sclerotherapy, you will have an initial consultation with a dermatologist or vascular medicine specialist who will decide if you're a good candidate for the procedure.

You are not eligible if you are pregnant. You can have sclerotherapy if you take birth control pills. If you have had a blood clot in the past, your eligibility will be decided on an individual basis, and will depend on the overall health of the area needing treatment as well as the reason for the clot.

Veins that are potentially usable for future heart bypass surgery will generally not be considered for sclerotherapy, unless they are already deemed unusable.

### How Sclerotherapy Is Done

In most cases of sclerotherapy, the salt solution is injected through a very fine needle directly into the vein. At this point, you may experience mild discomfort and cramping for one to two minutes, especially when larger veins are injected. The procedure itself takes approximately 15 to 30 minutes.

The number of veins injected in one session varies, and depends on the size and location of the veins, as well as the general medical condition of the patient.

Sclerotherapy is performed in the doctor's office and requires that you do not do any aerobic activity for a few days after the procedure.

### What to Do Before Sclerotherapy

Prior to sclerotherapy, you should avoid certain medications. Talk to your provider about all medicines (including over the counter drugs, herbs, and dietary supplements) you are taking. No lotion should be applied to the legs before the procedure.

Some doctors recommend avoiding aspirin, ibuprofen (such as Advil, Motrin, and Nuprin) or other anti-inflammatory drugs for 48-72 hours before sclerotherapy. Tylenol, however, should not affect this procedure.

### Side Effects of Sclerotherapy

You may experience certain side effects after sclerotherapy. There are milder effects, such as itching, which can last for one or two days after the procedure. Also, you may experience raised, red areas at the injection site. These should disappear within a few days. Bruising may also occur around the injection side and can last several days or weeks.

### Other Sclerotherapy Side Effects Include:

- Larger veins that have been injected may become lumpy and hard and may require several months to dissolve and fade.
- Brown lines or spots may appear at the vein site. In most cases, they disappear within three to six months.

- Neovascularization -- the development of new, tiny blood vessels -- may occur at the site of sclerotherapy treatment. These tiny veins can appear days or weeks after the procedure, but should fade within three to twelve months without further treatment.