

## Useful websites

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs](http://www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs)

# ULTRASOUND GUIDED FOAM SCLEROTHERAPY

## PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

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General Surgery

Sunderland Royal Hospital

This is a method of treatment of varicose veins, which has recently gained in popularity in the UK, although it has been used in Europe for a few years now. In some centres this treatment has almost completely replaced all other forms of treatment of varicose veins. In most centres, however, ultrasound guided foam sclerotherapy is used in selected patients only.

### Procedure

- The treatment is carried out using an ultrasound scanner for guidance.
- Multiple needles will be placed in the veins under ultrasound guidance, at appropriate intervals as necessary.
- The size of the needle will depend on the size and depth of the vein being treated. Local anaesthetic will be used for the larger needles.
- The sclerosant chemical in liquid form is converted into foam in a syringe.
- The concentration of the liquid used will depend on the size of the vein being treated.
- The sclerosant foam will be injected into the veins through these needles and the satisfactory spread of the foam in the veins will be confirmed with the ultrasound machine.
- After each injection of foam you will be instructed to vigorously move your ankle up and down to exercise the calf muscles.
- At the end of each session of treatment the leg will be bandaged and stockings applied. The bandage and stockings should be worn for one week and the stockings alone for a further week.
- You will be reviewed in two weeks for ultrasound assessment of the treated veins and for further treatment as necessary.

### Advantages

- The procedure is done as an out patient.
- There is little need for taking time off work.
- There is no need for a general anaesthetic.
- The response to the treatment is usually very satisfactory.

### Disadvantages

- Only one leg can be treated at a time.
- The volume of foam that can be injected at each session cannot exceed a safe limit; hence multiple sessions of treatment may be necessary if the veins are extensive.
- A few months is required for the final outcome to be obtained with resolution of all lumps and bruising.
- Complications can occur, as detailed below.
- Recurrence of veins in the future cannot be prevented.
- Total clearance of veins cannot be guaranteed.

### Complications

Serious complications are very rare. Minor complications occur in a proportion of patients but few cause any lasting problems. Many of these problems can also occur with other forms of treatment of varicose veins.

- Local redness, tenderness and hardness in the treated vein (which may require removal of trapped blood with a needle).
- Pigmentation of the skin overlying the treated vein (which could take several months to fade).
- Formation of thread veins.
- Ulceration (ulcers are small but painful).
- Short-lived chest tightness or coughing bout (very rare).
- Transient visual disturbances such as flashing lights(very rare).
- Deep vein thrombosis (causing heaviness, swelling & pain in the leg) (very rare).
- Allergy to the sclerosant medicine (very rare).