

## Ultrasound-Guided Foam Sclerotherapy

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### What is Foam Sclerotherapy?

Foam-Sclerotherapy is the newest way to treat spider and varicose veins. In this treatment the medication is mixed with air to form a suspension of micro-bubbles. The resulting foam is injected into the vein either directly or under ultrasound guidance. Because foam has a greater surface area than liquid, it is able to stick to the vein walls more effectively and cause faster "shrinkage" of the damaged veins. The treatment is more effective and uses much less medication. In clinical trials it has been found that foam-sclerotherapy treatment can be as effective as surgery.

### How is foam sclerotherapy performed?

A needle is inserted into the main affected superficial vein, usually under ultrasound guidance. Sclerosant foam is then injected and monitored using ultrasound. Once the foam has filled the main superficial vein, the upper end of the vein may be compressed to prevent entry of foam into the deeper veins. The foam causes inflammation of the vein wall, obliteration of the vein's lumen and vein occlusion. Further injections may be given during the same or different sessions to make sure that all the varicose veins have been completely filled.

### What are the results of foam sclerotherapy?

The initial cosmetic results of foam injection are excellent in the majority of patients. However, compared with endovenous laser (EVLT) or Radiofrequency (VNUS) Closure many patients with large varicose veins will not obtain long lasting benefit from foam sclerotherapy. Patients with smaller or recurrent veins benefit most from this treatment. The national Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence have recently evaluated the use of foam sclerotherapy and have published guidance for patients offered this procedure. You may read a copy of this guidance by clicking [www.nice.co.uk](http://www.nice.co.uk).

### What are the risks and possible problems?

Complications of foam sclerotherapy include inflammation of veins, blood clots (thrombosis) and changes in the skin's colouring. About 2% of patients have short-term side effects, including chest tightness, dry cough, headache, 'pins and needles' or problems with their vision. In a report on about 6400 foam sclerotherapy sessions, there were 37 adverse events (less than 1%). These included brief problems with vision (eight cases), while some people with vision problems also had headache, nausea or fainting (eight cases). In all 16 cases the problems disappeared on their own, with no after effects. Six patients fainted, three had thrombosis and one had deep vein thrombosis. One patient had a stroke shortly after having foam sclerotherapy. The risks with foam sclerotherapy and liquid sclerotherapy are about the same. Skin Pigmentation, darkening of the skin, can sometimes occur after foam sclerotherapy in about 1 in 4 patients. It may take up to a year to resolve but can occasionally be permanent.

**Contact us to discuss the most suitable treatment for your leg veins.**