

Radiofrequency Ablation of Varicose Veins

What is VNUS Closure Radiofrequency Ablation?

Endovenous therapy, such as VNUS Closure, is an alternative and more cosmetic way of dealing with varicose veins. A fine catheter is passed up the vein under ultrasound guidance. The ultrasound guidance ensures that only the correct vein is treated. The catheter tip is heated using microwave energy (Radiofrequency) and the vein wall is gently heated permanently shrinking and destroying the vein (ablation).

VNUS closure can be performed on an outpatient basis usually using local anaesthesia in which the doctor numbs the leg before treatment. Using ultrasound, the special catheter is positioned into the diseased vein, through a small opening in the skin. The tiny catheter powered by radiofrequency (RF) delivers heat to the vein wall. As the thermal energy is delivered, the vein wall shrinks and the vein is sealed shut so it cannot carry any more blood. Once the diseased vein is closed, blood is re-routed to other healthy veins. The temperatures involved are much lower than laser and the recovery is typically milder.

How well does VNUS Closure work?

Since 1998 more than 300,000 of these procedures have been performed worldwide. When stripping surgery and the endovenous procedures are compared, results are in favour of the endovenous procedures. Patients who undergo these procedures have less pain, usually resume normal activities faster and return to work more than a week earlier compared to vein stripping patients. In studies 98% of patients who have had these procedures are willing to recommend them to a friend or family member. Further information on VNUS Closure can be obtained at www.vnus.co.uk.

Should I have laser or microwaves to treat my veins?

At The Belfast Vein Clinic we offer both endovenous laser therapy and VNUS closure. The VNUS closure procedure (microwave energy) uses much less heat energy to damage the abnormal veins than laser and may be associated with less bruising after the procedure. You will be given enough information during your consultation to decide what the best treatment option is for your veins. Like most operations, excellent results can be obtained with either technology by surgeons who regularly perform large numbers of these procedures. Recently published data suggests that 5 years after treatment, 85% to 94% of the treated veins remain closed and free from venous reflux, the underlying cause of varicose veins.

Following endovenous therapy, some patients ask for the removal of their visible, lumpy veins. This is not always necessary, as in half of all our patients VNUS closure of the main feeding vein starves its adjoining veins of blood and results in their disappearance. This does however take up to six months. If you would prefer to have these veins removed during your endovenous therapy operation, this is easily done using the same local anaesthetic as for the main feeding vein and a tiny hook. Alternatively they can be treated with liquid or foam sclerotherapy at a later stage.

What is the aftercare after the procedure?

You will be given a compression stocking to wear for 7-14 days. You may and should walk immediately after the procedure. Thereafter, normal daily activity is fine, only vigorous activity or visits to the gym should be avoided. You may have some bruising and soreness for 7-10 days after the treatment. This will usually respond to oral pain relieving medication as needed. In very few patients this may be more

severe and may be eased with ice packs and rest. Any residual tightness in the leg should also have disappeared by this time.

What are the Key Benefits of VNUS Closure?

Endovenous therapy is a relative scar-free procedure that can be performed entirely under local anaesthetic in the majority of cases. It is applicable to nearly all patients including those with pre-existing medical conditions or medications preventing the administration of a general anaesthetic. Patients who have previously had unsuccessful varicose vein stripping can also have endovenous therapy. Cosmetic outcomes from endovenous therapy are far superior to stripping. Patients report minimal to no bruising, swelling or pain following the procedure. Many return to normal within a few days. The risk of the veins coming back is currently believed to be less than 7% (7 out of every 100 patients) at 4 years, far superior to the traditional stripping operation.

What are the possible Complications?

Fortunately, endovenous therapy has rarely been associated with any serious complications. Potential complications can include vessel perforation, venous thrombosis, pulmonary embolism, phlebitis, bruising, infection, paraesthesia (numbness or tingling), and skin burns. Endovenous therapy will normally treat the cause of most varicose veins but additional or complimentary therapy may be necessary in some cases. We will be able to provide the follow-up therapy for these minor cosmetic veins.

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