Injection Sclerotherapy for Thread Veins

What are Thread Veins?

Thread veins are red and purple blood vessels that occur in patches on the legs and face. They look like small spider webs, which is why they are also called spider veins. Another term for the same problem is naevi. Spider veins (referred to medically as telangiesctasias) and varicose veins are not the same condition. Varicose veins are large, swollen veins usually affecting the legs whereas spider veins are delicate and tend to develop in clusters.

Why have I got thread veins?

Exactly what happens in the body to produce thread veins is not known for sure. Women develop spider veins nearly four times as frequently as men. About 70 percent of adult women are afflicted with spider veins at some time in their lives. Spider veins appear to be hormonally induced and often are associated with pregnancy and use of the oral contraceptive pill. Although these spider veins do not produce symptoms, the feeder veins deeper in the skin may cause discomfort. The risk factors for spider veins include: A family predisposition for spider veins; Occupations that involve prolonged standing; Obesity; Pregnancy; Use of oral contraceptives; Hormone replacement therapy; History of blood clots; Medical conditions that may increase intra-abdominal pressure such as tumours and chronic liver disease; Prolonged sun exposure.

Are my thread veins dangerous?

Thread veins do not usually pose any major health problems. However they may cause aching and discomfort. In rare cases they may be a result of serious liver or other intraabdominal problems. Your doctor will be able to exclude these causes when you book an appointment. Most people with thread veins find them unsightly and embarrassing. Attempts to conceal them with clothing or cosmetic agents are often disappointing. Today a simple treatment called sclerotherapy is successfully being used to correct unwanted thread veins of the legs.

Is there any treatment for my veins?

Sclerotherapy is one technique used to treat spider veins (Figure 3). This involves the use of a very fine needle to inject a solution (sclerosant) directly into the veins. The solution causes the lining of the vein swell, eventually sealing off the blood vessel and preventing blood flow. After the skin has been thoroughly cleaned with alcohol, the doctor will use a syringe with a tiny needle to inject a small amount of the sclerosing (hardening) solution directly into a vein. The solution displaces the blood within the vein, causing it to blanch or turn white. The vessel then becomes irritated and begins to swell shut. When the needle is withdrawn, pressure is immediately applied to the area. The skin may be kneaded to help disperse the solution and reduce bruising. Each vein may require several injections and most disappear in two weeks to two months. Following each treatment we suggest the wearing of medium support tights for approximately one week.

What are the risks of sclerotherapy?

Patients who have sclerotherapy report very little discomfort. Some experience a slight to moderate burning sensation immediately after the injection, but this lasts literally only a few seconds.

Most of our patients experience no adverse effects. Some minor side effects that you should note include slight swelling which occurs as a reaction to the injection. This usually disappears over two or three days. Bruising around the treated area can occur and will disappear within two to fourteen days.

Occasionally, a small, dark area of pigmentation, resembling a freckle, may remain. These spots resolve spontaneously and treatment with bleaching agents is rarely necessary. In some cases the treatment is not effective and may leave the treated area looking slightly brighter in colour.

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