

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT
SCLEROTHERAPY (VEIN INJECTION)

Spider veins are known medically as “telangiectasias” and are small, dilated blood vessels. These may become unsightly with time and may also lead to dull aching, itching, or stinging of the legs after prolonged standing. *Varicose veins* are the large veins you see.

Sclerotherapy is the technique of injecting a solution into these vessels using a small needle. The solution irritates and destroys the inner lining of the blood vessel so that it collapses and scars shut. *This does not harm the circulation – it improves it by eliminating the abnormal, unnecessary vessel.* Several injections may be needed to totally eliminate the vessels. The procedure is virtually painless. Fading of the vessels is a slow process that takes 1 to 6 months. The goal is to produce a 75% to 90% improvement in both appearance and symptoms.

A *consultation appointment* is required in advance of the injection visit. The doctor examines the patient and explains the procedure. At this point the doctor will make a recommendation about support hose. The custom stockings are washable and will last 6 months with proper care. They are specially made so they create more pressure at the foot and less as they go up the leg, which helps push blood back to the heart. *The patient should wear a skirt or bring loose, comfortable shorts to the visit. Lotion should not be used on the lower legs the day of the consultation or for treatment sessions.*

Results of treatment cannot be guaranteed, but most patients are very pleased with the cosmetic and functional improvement.

Some commonly asked questions include the following:

What causes spider veins?

No one is completely sure. Certain families are predisposed to this condition, so it is in part genetic. Estrogens (i.e. female hormones), pregnancy, birth control pills, tight girdles and garter belts, prolonged standing or sitting, and trauma make spider and varicose veins worse.

How does sclerotherapy work?

The solution destroys the tiny cells that line the blood vessels, without damage to the surrounding tissues.

How soon will the vessels disappear?

Each vessel usually requires one to three treatments. The vessels disappear over a period of 2 weeks to 3 months. Recurrences may occur over a period of 1 to 5 years, but this is rare. However, this treatment does not prevent new vessels from developing.