

# SPIDER VEIN TREATMENT

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## WHAT IS SPIDER VEIN TREATMENT?

In some women, spider veins – those small clusters of red, blue, or purple veins that appear on the thighs, calves, and ankles – become noticeable at a young age. For others, the veins may not become obvious until much later. A number of factors may contribute to the development of spider veins in the legs, including:

- Heredity
- Hormonal shifts
- Occupations or activities that require prolonged sitting or standing
- Pregnancy
- Weight fluctuation

There are effective, safe and relatively painless methods available for reducing spider veins.

Spider vein treatment is a good option if you:

- Are bothered by spider veins anywhere on your body
- Are committed to following your plastic surgeon's prescribed course of treatment
- Have a positive outlook and realistic goals for your spider vein treatment



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# CONSULTATION & PREPARING FOR SURGERY

## ***During your consultation be prepared to discuss:***

- Any problems you may have had in the area to be treated, such as pain or previous injuries
- Any surgical procedures that have been performed near the area to be treated, including any previous vein treatments
- Current medications, vitamins, herbal supplements, alcohol, tobacco, and drug use
- Medical conditions, family history, drug allergies, and medical treatments
- Your goals

## ***Your surgeon will also:***

- Evaluate your general health status and any pre-existing health conditions or risk factors
- Examine your veins in detail
- Discuss likely outcomes of spider vein treatment and any risks or potential complications
- Discuss your options
- Recommend a course of treatment

If leg veins are the problem, your surgeon may examine you for signs of more serious “deep vein” problems, as well as for larger, varicose veins. These conditions are often identified by swelling, sores, or skin changes at the ankle. If more serious vascular problems are identified, your surgeon may refer you to a different specialist for further evaluation and possible treatment.

## ***Prior to spider vein treatment, you may be asked to:***

- Avoid taking aspirin, anti-inflammatory drugs, and herbal supplements as they can increase bleeding
- Stop smoking
- Take certain medications or adjust your current medications

Spider vein treatment requires no anesthesia and is usually performed in an outpatient setting. More than one treatment session may be required to obtain optimal results.

Be sure to ask your plastic surgeon questions. It's very important to understand all aspects of your spider vein treatment. It's natural to feel some anxiety, whether it's excitement for your anticipated new look or a bit of pretreatment stress. Don't be shy about discussing these feelings with your plastic surgeon.

## THE PROCEDURE

The common method of treating spider veins in the legs and ankles is called sclerotherapy. During this treatment, a sclerosing solution is injected into the affected veins. The injection irritates the inside of the vein, and over time the vein will collapse and fade from view. If you have multiple spider veins, the treatment will require multiple injections to collapse all the veins.

Bright light and magnification may be used to ensure maximum precision while injecting the sclerosing solution.

After treatment, the area may be dressed with compressive tape or stockings, or an elastic Ace wrap for a period of time. The veined area often looks a bit bruised initially, and the color slowly fades over the course of a few weeks. Some people can have a bit of brownish discoloration (hyperpigmentation) occur to the area during the healing process. This hyperpigmentation fades as well, but may take months.

Spider veins may also be treated with a laser. In this method, an intense beam of light is directed at the spider vein, which obliterates it through the skin. More than one laser session may be needed to obtain the desired results. Sometimes, laser therapy is used in combination with sclerotherapy.

## RISKS & SAFETY

The decision to have spider vein treatment is extremely personal. You will have to decide if the benefits will achieve your goals and if the risks and potential complications are acceptable. You will be asked to sign consent forms to ensure that you fully understand the procedure and any risks.

### **The risks include:**

- Swelling and bruising
- Change in skin sensation
- Infection
- Hyperpigmentation
- Ulceration
- Scarring
- Persistent pain

These risks and others will be fully discussed prior to your consent. It's important that you address all your questions directly with your plastic surgeon.

# RECOVERY AFTER THE PROCEDURE

After your treatment, you may be instructed to wear support hose to help your legs heal. The treated sites will appear bruised and you may feel some cramping in your legs for the first day or two after treatment. This discomfort is temporary and usually doesn't require prescription medication.

Although every patient heals at a different rate, most are back to normal activities quickly. You will be given specific instructions that may include how to care for your legs following treatment, medications to apply or take orally to aid healing and reduce the risk of infection, and when to follow-up with your plastic surgeon.

You can expect that your recovery will follow this general time line:

## ***Within the first week***

- You may be instructed to wear support stockings for three to six weeks
- You should avoid squatting, heavy lifting and running
- The tape, cotton balls or any other dressings (if used) will be removed from the treated areas when recommended by the plastic surgeon
- The treated sites will appear bruised
- You will be discouraged from sitting or standing in one place for more than an hour or two
- You will be encouraged to walk

## ***Within one month***

- The bruises at the treated sites will diminish
- You will begin to feel more comfortable wearing leg-baring fashions
- You can resume most exercise
- One month after the first treatment, spider veins are distinctly lighter, yet still somewhat visible
- You will be discouraged from sitting or standing in one place for more than an hour or two

After two months, your veins treatment should have completed its healing. At this point, you and your plastic surgeon will decide if any additional treatment is necessary.



# RESULTS

After each treatment, you will notice improvement of your skin's appearance. However, it is important to realize that new spider veins may surface in the future. As time passes, you may want to consider further treatment to take care of any new veins that may emerge.

The practice of medicine and surgery is not an exact science. Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee. Be sure to discuss with your surgeon the results expected in your case, as well as the cost involved.



# COST

Prices for spider vein treatment can vary, depending on the number of treatments required, and the method of treatment chosen.

## **Cost may include:**

- Post-treatment garments
- Surgeon's fee

## **Most health insurance does not cover cosmetic surgery or its complications.**

When choosing a plastic surgeon for spider vein treatment, remember that the surgeon's experience and your comfort with him or her are just as important as the final cost of the surgery.

Plastic surgery involves many choices. The first and most important is selecting a physician who is a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. ASPS member surgeons meet rigorous standards:

- Board certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS)<sup>®</sup> or in Canada by The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada<sup>®</sup>
- Complete at least six years of surgical training following medical school with a minimum of three years of plastic surgery residency training
- Pass comprehensive oral and written exams
- Graduate from an accredited medical school
- Complete continuing medical education, including patient safety each year
- Perform surgery in accredited, state-licensed, or Medicare-certified surgical facilities

## **Do not be confused by other official sounding boards and certifications.**

The ABPS is recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), which has approved medical specialty boards since 1934. There is no ABMS recognized certifying board with "cosmetic surgery" in its name. By choosing a member of The American Society of Plastic Surgeons, you can be assured that you are choosing a qualified, highly trained plastic surgeon who is board-certified by the ABPS or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

*This brochure is intended strictly for educational purposes. It is not intended to make any representations or warranties about the outcome of any procedure. It is not a substitute for a thorough, in-person consultation with a board certified plastic surgeon.*

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