

# Sclerotherapy: Before Your Procedure

## What is sclerotherapy?

Sclerotherapy is a treatment to get rid of varicose veins. A chemical called a sclerosant is injected into the varicose vein. This causes the vein to close.

The procedure may cause some pain. The chemical may cause burning or cramping for a few minutes at the injection site.

The procedure can take up to 30 minutes. It depends on how many veins are treated and how big they are. You should be able to walk on your own after the treatment.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## What happens before the procedure?

Procedures can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for your procedure.

### Preparing for the procedure

- Understand exactly what procedure is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- Tell your doctors ALL the medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies you take. Some of these can increase the risk of bleeding or interact with anesthesia.
- If you take blood thinners, such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), or aspirin, be sure to talk to your doctor. He or she will tell you if you should stop taking these medicines before your procedure. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before your procedure. You may need to stop taking certain medicines a week or more before the procedure. So talk to your doctor as soon as you can.
- If you have an advance directive, let your doctor know. It may include a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care. Bring a copy to the hospital. If you don't have one, you may want to prepare one. It lets your doctor and loved ones know your health care wishes. Doctors advise that everyone prepare these papers before any type of surgery or procedure.
- Plan to wear loose, comfortable clothes. You may want to bring shorts to wear during the procedure.
- Don't use any lotion on your legs before the procedure.

## What happens on the day of the procedure?

- Follow the instructions exactly about when to stop eating and drinking. If you don't, your procedure may be canceled. If your doctor told you to take your medicines on the day of the procedure, take them with only a sip of water.
- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your procedure. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do not shave the surgical site yourself.
- Take off all jewelry and piercings. And take out contact lenses, if you wear them.

## At the doctor's office or clinic

- Bring a picture ID.
- You will be kept comfortable and safe by your anesthesia provider. The anesthesia may make you sleep. Or it may just numb the area being worked on.
- The procedure will take up to 30 minutes.

## Going home

- Be sure you have someone to drive you home.
- You will be given more specific instructions about recovering from your procedure. They will cover things like diet, wound care, follow-up care, driving, and getting back to your normal routine.

## When should you call your doctor?

- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your procedure.
- You become ill before the procedure (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the procedure.

### Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **C494** in the search box to learn more about "**Sclerotherapy: Before Your Procedure.**"

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# Sclerotherapy: What to Expect at Home

## Your Recovery

After sclerotherapy to treat varicose veins, your recovery will be short. You should be able to walk right away, but plan to take it easy for a day or two.

You will probably need to wear compression stockings after the procedure. These will help keep pressure on the veins so the blood doesn't return when you stand up. Your doctor will tell you how long you need to wear the stockings.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to feel better as quickly as possible.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

### Activity

- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Try to walk each day. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow.
- Avoid strenuous activities, such as bicycle riding, jogging, weight lifting, or aerobic exercise, until your doctor says it is okay.

### Medicine

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. He or she will also give you instructions about taking any new medicines.
- If you take blood thinners, such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), or aspirin, be sure to talk to your doctor. He or she will tell you if and when to start taking those medicines again. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.

### Other instructions

- You may have a dressing over the cut (incision). Your doctor will tell you how to take care of this.
- You may shower 24 to 48 hours after the procedure. Pat the incision dry. Don't swim or take a bath for 2 days, or until your doctor tells you it is okay.
- Avoid exposing your legs to the sun for the first 2 weeks after the procedure.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## When should you call for help?

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have severe trouble breathing.
- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You get open sores on your legs where the chemical was injected.
- You have signs of a blood clot, such as:
  - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
  - Redness and swelling in your leg or groin.
- You have problems with your vision or balance.
- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You have signs of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks leading from the area of injection.
  - Pus draining from the area of injection.
  - A fever.

Watch closely for any changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

### Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

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