

Hastings Surgeons, P.C.

1005 W. Green Street, Suite 300
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(269) 948-8411

WHAT IS SCLEROTHERAPY?

Sclerotherapy is an effective, non-surgical treatment for unwanted spider veins of the legs. Using a very fine needle, the practitioner injects a sclerosing solution directly into the veins. The sclerosing agent irritates the lining of the vein wall, makes it contract, collapse, and eventually disappear. The vein becomes inflamed, blood can no longer flow through it and ultimately, the body absorbs these non-functioning vessels.

DOES SCLEROTHERAPY WORK FOR EVERYONE?

The majority of people who undergo sclerotherapy will see significant improvement. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that sclerotherapy will be effective in every case. Approximately 10% of patients who undergo sclerotherapy have poor to fair results. (“Poor results” means that the veins have not totally disappeared after six treatments.) In very rare instances, the patient’s condition may become worse after sclerotherapy treatment.

HOW MANY TREATMENTS WILL I NEED?

The number of treatments needed to clear or improve the condition differs from patient to patient depending on the extents of varicose and spider veins present. Six (6) or more treatments may be needed. The average is three (3) to four (4) treatments. However, there is no guarantee that multiple treatments will clear all veins. While Sclerotherapy is a safe and highly effective, **more than one treatment** is usually required to clear or improve unsightly veins to a patient’s satisfaction.

WHAT IS THE COST OF SCLEROTHERAPY AND IS IT COVERED BY MY INSURANCE?

The cost of this procedure is based on the number of veins being treated and the number of sessions required. Procedures like ambulatory phlebectomy or endovenous radiofrequency ablation to treat severe varicose veins and leg pain are usually covered by insurance companies for medical reasons. However, sclerotherapy treatment of spider veins is considered cosmetic, and patients typically pay out of pocket. There are several exceptions to this, so be sure to ask about your particular insurance.

Consultations are free. If sclerotherapy treatment is right for you, we will schedule three 30 – 60 minute visits for you at an initial cost of \$300.00. On average, three visits are sufficient to treat one leg. However, up to six visits may be required in some cases.

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WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS AND RISKS OF SCLEROTHERAPY?

The most common side effects are:

- **Itching:** Depending upon the type of solution used, you may experience mild itching along the vein route. This itching normally lasts one (1) to two (2) hours but may persist for a day or so.
- **Bruising:** Lasts from one to several weeks. Use of support hose is highly recommended and avoidance of alcohol and anticoagulant medication for 72 hours prior to each treatment session may minimize effect.
- **Transient Hyperpigmentation:** Approximately ten percent (10%) of the patients who undergo sclerotherapy notice a discoloration of light brown streaks after treatment. In almost every patient, the veins become darker immediately after the procedure (but then go away). In rare instances, this darkening of the vein may persist for four (4) to twelve (12) months.
- **Superficial blebs or wheals similar to hives:** The injections may produce a skin reaction at the injection site. The practitioner will typically massage the area after injection to reduce this reaction. This should resolve within 24 – 48 hours.
- **Pain:** The veins may be tender to the touch after treatment and an uncomfortable sensation may run along the vein route. This pain is usually temporary, in most cases lasting one (1) to at most seven (7) days.

Less common side effects include:

- Superficial clot formation requiring aspiration in larger veins
- Mild allergic reaction to the sclerosis agent
- Blisters and/or ulcer formation (blisters may open up and become ulcers)
- Neovascularization, or the formation of new tiny pink veins – usually temporary
- Swelling of the legs and/or feet – usually temporary
- Strange taste in mouth during injections – temporary
- “Floaters” or dark spots in your field of vision – temporary
- Migraines in people prone to having migraines

Rare, but serious complications include:

- Permanent skin staining
- Deep ulcer formation with scarring
- Keloid scarring
- Infection, phlebitis
- Post phlebitis syndrome resulting in permanent swelling of the leg
- Anaphylactic allergic reaction
- Deep venous clot formation
- Pulmonary embolism (a blood clot that travels to the lung)
- Death

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BEFORE YOUR SCLEROTHERAPY APPOINTMENT

Avoid tanning and artificial tanning lotion. It is best to schedule your appointment when your skin is its normal pre-tanned state. Skin that is tan is more likely to develop hyperpigmentation or skin staining.

Compression stockings should be purchased prior to your appointment so that you can wear them home from your visit.

Please wear shorts, a skirt, or loose pants to allow easy access to the areas that will be treated.

Do not wear lotion on the leg to be treated.

Payment is expected the day of your appointment prior to treatment.

AFTER YOUR SCLEROTHERAPY APPOINTMENT

The solutions used for sclerotherapy do not typically cause pain, however you may experience slight to moderate itching, burning, or leg cramping. This usually goes away within an hour or two. Try walking, taking an over the counter pain reliever, or using an ice pack to the area to relieve any discomfort.

Patients may return to normal activity immediately following sclerotherapy. In fact, walking after sclerotherapy is highly recommended. Vigorous exercise like running, jumping and contact sports is discouraged for 24 to 48 hours.

You will need to wear compression stockings continuously for the next 48 hours following sclerotherapy treatment. Then for 1 -2 weeks you will wear them whenever you are on your feet or sitting with your legs down. This will help prevent new spider veins from occurring (neovascularization.)

Use sunscreen when treated areas are exposed to sun, and avoid tanning (natural light or artificial) for six weeks following sclerotherapy. Tanning increases the risk of hyperpigmentation or skin staining that can be permanent.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call our office at (269) 948-8411.