

## Laser Spider/Leg Vein Q & A

### **What are spider veins?**

Millions of women and men are bothered by unsightly spider veins on their faces and legs. Spider veins or telangiectasias are those small red, blue and purple blood vessels that appear most frequently on the face and thighs. These spider veins are entirely asymptomatic and only of a cosmetic concern.

### **What is the best treatment for spider veins?**

The best and gold standard treatment for spider veins is laser. Laser vein removal is an easy, fast, and effective way to treat superficial veins. Laser therapy has been used in the medicine for more than 30 years. Advances in technology have helped develop many different lasers. The laser uses a focused beam of light. In the treatment of veins, the wavelength of light is targeted to the pigment in the blood. The laser heats up the small vein and destroys it. The laser beam is focused and does not damage the nearby skin tissue. Over a period of four to six weeks, the vein is reabsorbed by the body and disappears.

### **How does the laser work?**

During laser therapy, light energy is delivered through a small laser hand piece to a targeted vein, in a series of brief pulses. The light energy is absorbed by the lining of the blood vessels and the blood within the blood vessels. The heat generated causes a coagulation (clotting) of the blood, which is subsequently

absorbed by the body. The advanced laser treatments allow the delivery of a precise dosage of energy to each blood vessel.

### **How do I know if I am a candidate for laser vein treatment?**

All individuals are evaluated prior to laser therapy. Spider veins do not cause symptoms and are of a cosmetic concern only. For those who have symptoms, further investigation is done to ensure that they do not have varicose veins. Laser therapy is most effective for the very small spider veins and not used to treat large varicose veins.

### **Do I require a preparation before laser therapy?**

The procedure is done in a doctor's office or clinic and usually takes less than 10-20 minutes.

### **How should I Prepare for treatment?**

Prior to treatment, the patient's skin should be thoroughly clean and dry. One should be sure to remove any make-up, creams, oils, topical anesthetic or self-tanning products. **In addition, the treatment area should not be exposed to sunlight or tanning booth light for at least 2 weeks prior to the procedure.** For patients who have had a history of herpes simplex virus and are interested in facial vein removal, prophylactic antiviral therapy may be prescribed. Please consult your Primary Physician BEFORE treatment.

### **What happens during the laser vein therapy?**

Only the very small superficial veins are treated with a laser. Generally no anesthetic is required for the procedure. The laser has a specialized chilled hand piece which acts to cool the surface of the skin while the beam from the laser penetrates the skin. Pulses of light energy are then administered in a sequential fashion.

### **Can all my veins be treated with the laser?**

No, smaller red/blue spider veins can be treated successfully with LightSheer Duet. Veins larger than 3mm in diameter are most successfully treated with Asclera sclerotherapy. Laser vein reduction generally requires up to three treatments for acceptable clearance. Veins that are not successful with laser vein treatment may be treated with sclerotherapy.

### **Is laser therapy painful?**

During your treatment, you will feel a slight tingling sensation as the laser fires.

### **When do the spider veins disappear?**

The majority of the treated spider veins will disappear within two to three treatments. The treatments can be spaced four to six weeks apart. If new veins appear, additional treatments are required for optimum results. The treatments may be spaced every three to four week intervals. Larger/deeper veins may require sclerotherapy for clearance.

### **What are side effects of laser therapy?**

The skin above the veins will have a reddish, cat-scratch appearance. There may be bruising and tenderness to the treated area. Blisters may occur and are common. This generally disappears over the next week. There are also risks for hyper or hypo-pigmentation of the skin.

### **What happens after laser therapy?**

Patients are encouraged to resume all normal activities immediately. Final results may not be apparent for several months. Most patients are satisfied by the results in a very short time.

### **Are there any other risks with laser therapy?**

The risks associated with laser vein therapy are minimal. Your eyes will be shielded during the treatments. Most facilities use state-of-the-art cooling systems, thus the treatments are low risk and relatively pain-free

### **How many treatments will I need?**

Depending on the size and number of veins, two to six treatments will be needed.

### **Is laser therapy covered by medical insurance?**

No, spider veins are only of cosmetic nuisance and not covered by medical insurance or Medicare.

## **What should I bring for my treatment?**

*For Laser Vein Treatment:*

Patients are advised to bring ice packs to sooth post treatment areas. These tend to stay cooler longer than instant ice packs. Patients should use a lunch cooler to keep ice packs cold during treatment.

## **What will happen after treatment?**

Redness often has faded greatly by the next day. It would not be uncommon for the skin to be slightly drier that evening and to require more moisturizing cream.

The treated blood vessels, in particular on the legs, may appear slightly more obvious or a bit darker for the next week or two, but this is seldom a major cosmetic problem. Occasionally on the legs, less frequently on the face, there can be isolated superficial bruising or blistering, which generally is a nuisance and resolves within a week or two on the face, or several weeks on the legs without needing any treatment.

## **Why do the blood vessels sometimes look more obvious for several weeks after treatment?**

After the blood vessels are treated with laser energy, they sometimes swell up slightly, and the body moves in to begin the job of removing the treated vessels. Sometimes portions of the vessels will seal off immediately, and a bit of blood stays behind in the treated vessels, causing temporary red or purple coloration. If this happens, the blood in the vessels is usually reabsorbed along with the

vessels themselves by the body over a period of several weeks to a couple of months on the legs, without needing any additional treatment.

### **Are there any restrictions on my activity after treatment?**

You can return to work the same day and resume all your regular activities. No exercise for 3-4 day following treatment. To reduce the chance of uneven tanning in the treated area, **you should eliminate sun exposure and tanning for a two weeks after treatments.**

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### **Sclerotherapy/Asclera Leg Vein Q & A**

Varicose veins are abnormally swollen or enlarged blood vessels caused by a weakening in the vein's wall. They can be harmful to a patient's health because they may be associated with the development of one or more of the following conditions: phlebitis or inflamed, tender vein; thrombosis or a clot in the vein; and venous stasis ulcers or open sores from inadequate tissue oxygen and fluid retention.

### **Who develops spider and varicose veins?**

The exact cause of spider and varicose veins is unknown, although heredity, pregnancy and hormonal influences are believed to be primary factors contributing to both conditions. More than 40 percent of women have some form of varicose conditions, with an increasing incidence of venous disease as one gets older, so that up to 80% of women have some form of venous disease

by age 80. Slightly more women than men have varicose and telangiectatic leg veins.

### **What is sclerotherapy?**

Sclerotherapy is considered the gold standard treatment for removing spider and some varicose leg veins. It is a very cost-effective procedure that seldom leaves a scar or produces adverse effects. It is typically performed on an outpatient basis by a dermatologic surgeon. A concentrated saline or specially developed chemical solution is injected with a very small needle into the spider or varicose vein. The solution causes the vein to close up or collapse and become scar tissue that is eventually absorbed by the body. The work of carrying the blood is shifted to other healthy blood vessels nearby.

Sclerotherapy generally requires multiple treatment sessions. One to three injections are usually required to effectively treat any vein. The same area should not be retreated for four to six weeks to allow for complete healing, although other areas may undergo treatment during this time. Many vein surgeons have found that treating all abnormal veins in one session gives the best results.

Post-treatment therapy includes wearing bandages and support hose for two days to three weeks (most commonly one week) following treatment. Walking and moderate exercise also helps speed recovery. Although sclerotherapy

works for existing spider and varicose veins, it does not prevent new ones from developing, but may decrease this risk.

### **How should I Prepare for treatment?**

All patients interested in sclerotherapy must purchase compression stockings PRIOR to treatment. Please call our office for more information, 440-247-3111.

### **Are there side effects or complications?**

Most patients report few, if any minor side effects, which usually disappear in time. Temporary reactions can include a slight swelling of the leg or foot, minor bruising, pigmentation, the temporary appearance of new blood vessels, redness and mild soreness. Full prescribing information regarding this treatment will be available during your consultation.