

A Patient's Guide to Microsclerotherapy for Leg Thread Veins

This guide is designed to help you make an informed decision about treatment for leg thread veins. It has been written by Gaynor Hughes, a Board Member of the British Association of Sclerotherapists.

Key Takeaways

- Microsclerotherapy is considered the "gold standard" treatment for leg thread veins.
 - It's a safe and effective treatment, but it's crucial to have it done by a medically qualified healthcare professional.
 - Most people need 2-3 treatments, spaced about 8-12 weeks apart.
 - Results take time to show, and not all veins will completely disappear, but their appearance will be greatly reduced.
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What are thread veins?

Prominent veins, whether they are large varicose veins or unsightly spider or thread veins, can be very distressing and cause embarrassment, affecting daily life. Thread veins are very common and can occur due to various reasons, including:

- the ageing process
- genetics
- prolonged standing or a sedentary lifestyle
- hormonal changes and pregnancy
- injury

What is Sclerotherapy?

Sclerotherapy is a method of treating these veins by injecting a prescription drug, called a sclerosant, which disrupts the lining of the vein, causing it to collapse and then fade away. Microsclerotherapy is the specific treatment for thread veins, using the same method but with a lower concentration of sclerosant because these veins are very small. It is considered the "gold standard" treatment for leg thread veins.

Is it safe?

Sclerotherapy is considered a safe and effective treatment. However, like any procedure, there are potential side effects and risks, so it is strongly advisable to ensure you have this treatment performed by a medically qualified healthcare professional.

Microsclerotherapy is not recommended to treat ankle and facial veins. Facial veins can be easily and effectively treated with short wave diathermy or

IPL/laser.

How to choose a practitioner

Microsclerotherapy and other vein treatments are not available on the NHS, as they are often considered cosmetic, even though vein problems are a clinical condition.

Treatments are provided in private vein clinics, medical aesthetic clinics, and private dermatology clinics. You should look for medically qualified practitioners who have had appropriate training in Microsclerotherapy and are registered with their professional body, such as the NMC (Nurse and Midwifery Council), GMC (General Medical Council), and GDC (General Dental Council). You can check their registration online via these websites.

Medical practitioners welcome questions and will be happy to provide information about their qualifications, training, and contact details.

How do I know if I am suitable for treatment?

The first step is a face-to-face consultation where the practitioner will take your medical history and examine your legs. To help rule out any underlying vein problems that are not always visible, a Doppler ultrasound is carried out. This test helps detect if there is any reflux (return of blood flow).

If there is an indication of an underlying vein problem, you should be referred for a duplex ultrasound scan to confirm this. If an underlying vein problem is

confirmed, treatment options can then be discussed.

If the assessment shows no sign of other vein problems, Microsclerotherapy for thread veins can proceed, providing your medical history is suitable.

The consultation is an opportunity for you to ask many questions. You should not feel rushed into having a treatment and should be given time to consider everything before treatment. Do not feel pressured into having a treatment on the same day as your consultation.

What to consider before treatment

Your treatment plan will be discussed during your consultation. Most people require more than one treatment, typically 2-3 sessions. These are usually spaced approximately 8-12 weeks apart. Microsclerotherapy cannot be rushed, as it takes time for your body to break down the treated thread veins. Please mention if you have an important event or holiday planned close to your treatment dates.

Some clinics provide compression hosiery after treatment. This is something you might want to consider if planning treatment in the summer months, as it may be too hot to wear compression hosiery. It is also advisable to avoid sitting in the sun after treatment to reduce the risk of a complication that causes pigmentation. Some people choose to start their Microsclerotherapy treatment in the autumn and continue over the winter months.

On the day of treatment

Microsclerotherapy is a minimally invasive treatment, and appointments usually last between 30 minutes to an hour. Photographs will be taken, which are useful for reviewing treatment progress. Wear loose clothing and suitable footwear if compression hosiery will be applied.

The treatment is not painful but can trigger a histamine response that may feel prickly, like a nettle sting. Antihistamine tablets are effective in soothing this. This sensation is normal and nothing to be concerned about. After treatment, compression hosiery will be applied if applicable.

Most clinics offer a two-week follow-up appointment. This will be discussed with your practitioner, and you will be provided with an aftercare sheet that should also include the practitioner's emergency contact details.

Expected Results and Aftercare in More Detail

Results are generally good, but remember they take time to become visibly apparent. Depending on your skin type, not all veins will completely disappear, but their appearance will be significantly reduced.

Following your treatment, you will likely be advised to wear compression hosiery for a certain period. This helps keep pressure on the treated veins and encourages them to close effectively. You should also avoid sitting in direct sunlight on the treated areas to reduce the risk of pigmentation. Your practitioner will give you a detailed aftercare sheet with specific instructions, including any activity restrictions and who to contact in case of an emergency. It's normal for the treated areas to look bruised or discoloured initially, and this will fade over several weeks as the veins are absorbed by your body.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Will the treatment be painful?

A: The treatment itself is not considered painful, but you might feel a prickly sensation, similar to a nettle sting, due to a histamine response. Antihistamines can help soothe that feeling.

Q: How many treatments will I need?

A: Most people require more than one treatment, usually 2-3 sessions, spaced approximately 8-12 weeks apart.

Q: How long do the results last?

A: The treated veins are permanently closed. However, new thread veins can develop over time due to the same factors that caused the initial ones, such as ageing or genetics.

Q: Can I have Microsclerotherapy on my face or ankles?

A: No, Microsclerotherapy is not advisable for treating veins on the ankle and face. Facial veins can be treated effectively with short wave diathermy or IPL/laser.

Q: What should I wear on treatment day?

A: Wear loose clothing and suitable footwear, especially if compression hosiery will be applied after your treatment.