

PATIENT INFORMATION
Varicose & Thread
Vein Treatments



Please use this space to make a note of any questions you wish to ask:

Varicose & Thread Vein Treatments

Spencer Private Hospital, Ramsgate Road, Margate, Kent, CT9 4BG

Appointments and General Enquiries: 01843 234 555

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Introduction

If you suffer from the embarrassment of unsightly varicose or thread veins or any of their complications - discomfort, discolouration or ulceration, Spencer Private Hospitals are pleased to offer the latest treatments at a time to suit you. NHS treatment for varicose veins is now severely restricted, and is simply not available at all for “cosmetic” conditions such as thread veins. Spencer Private Hospitals are committed to providing a personalised service for the diagnosis and treatment of venous problems and provides diagnostic techniques and precision treatments producing excellent surgical and cosmetic results.

Our Consultant

Mr George Tsavellas MS FRCS Consultant Surgeon

- Qualified at Charing Cross & Westminster Medical School, London.
- Consultant Laparoscopic Surgeon in East Kent since 2004.
- Specialist in minimally invasive procedures including laser surgery for varicose veins.



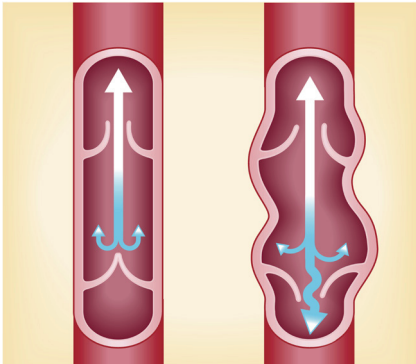
What are Varicose Veins?

Varicose veins are abnormally swollen, twisted, blue veins that protrude from the surface of the skin. The role of normal veins is to carry blood back from the leg to the heart.

Weakness of the vein wall allows valves in the superficial veins to stretch so that they do not close properly. Blood then flows back down into the leg along these veins. The veins and their branches enlarge and can be seen on the surface as varicose veins.

Raised pressure in these veins encourages the development of spider veins and discoloured areas which look like bruises. The damaged valves cannot be mended and the best way to cure the problem is to take out the affected veins. All varicose veins are removed leaving only the normal vessels so that venous blood can no longer flow the wrong way, back down into the leg.





Varicose veins are usually obvious due to their visibility, especially on standing. They are enlarged, often bulging beneath the skin. Early symptoms include discomfort, aching, heaviness, fatigue, burning, throbbing and cramps. They may be associated with areas of thread veins on the skin. If left untreated, irritation of the skin around the ankles with swelling of the feet (worse at the end of the day) and discolouration may occur.

Finally, eczema, phlebitis (inflammation of the vein) and ulceration may occur. Large varicose veins can also be easily damaged by a minor injury resulting in profuse bleeding. Many people, however, only suffer the cosmetic embarrassment of visible veins.

Varicose veins often run in families and may affect up to 30% of the adult population in western countries. Men and women develop varicose veins to an equal extent, but women more frequently seek treatment.

Prolonged standing, excess weight, hormonal medications and pregnancy worsen varicose veins.

Why Should Varicose Veins Be Treated?

Varicose veins do not get better by themselves; they get worse slowly and progressively. Early treatment often prevents the symptoms developing and of course, removes the unsightly appearance, in fact, the earlier you receive specialist treatment the better the long term clinical and cosmetic results.

Spencer Private Hospitals offer treatments that have been developed by world expert vein specialists and have gained approval from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) and most major insurance companies. Treatment is designed for each patient based on clinical history, examination and their investigation with a vein scan.

Where Does the Blood Go If My Varicose Veins Are Removed?

When functioning normally, the entire system of superficial veins only return less than 10% of the blood flow from the legs. However, varicose veins are not normal veins. They are diseased vessels that allow venous blood to move back down the leg – in the wrong direction. This interferes with normal circulation and forces normal veins to work harder. Eliminating the diseased veins is good for your circulation and reduces the workload for normal veins.

When varicose veins are eliminated, patients often notice that their legs feel better and less tired.

Diagnosis & Investigation

Careful clinical examination of the leg veins is necessary before treatment starts. An ultrasound scan allows accurate diagnosis and mapping of your leg veins so that a tailored treatment of your veins can be offered. All patients seen for a new consultation at The Spencer Private Hospital therefore undergo a Doppler ultrasound of the leg veins.

Knowing where the problem has arisen enables the specialist to plan accurate treatment therefore reducing the risk of recurrence.



Conventional Treatments

Support Stockings

Compression graduated stockings can be prescribed to slow down the progression of leg varicose veins. This is done for symptomatic relief, but they must be worn every day for the rest of your life to be effective. Stockings may help vein symptoms so long as they are worn, but they will not cure the problem.

Surgery

Surgical treatment of varicose veins involves a general anaesthetic and may require a night in hospital. Usually the surgeon will make a small incision in the groin and then a further incision just below the knee. The main varicose vein will then be stripped out between these incisions. At the same time, the surgeon may make several smaller stab incisions around the lower leg and calf to remove the unsightly smaller vein branches - a procedure known as multiple avulsions or phlebectomies. Following surgery your leg will be heavily bandaged and you are likely to require some time away from work to recover. The discomfort and bruising from the surgery will take several weeks to subside.

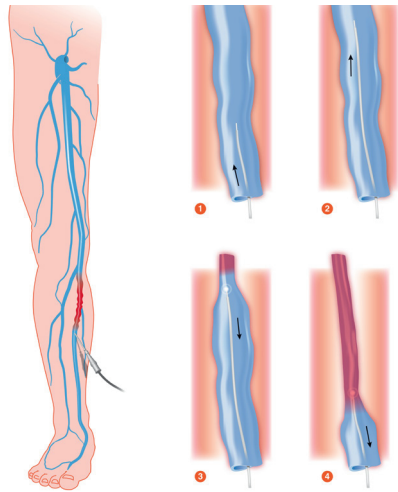
Surgery for varicose veins is still occasionally performed for some patients and your surgeon will advise you if this is the best treatment for you.

Endovenous Treatments

EVLA (Endovenous Laser Ablation)

Endovenous laser ablation (EVLA) is a very effective alternative to the surgical stripping of veins. It is carried out either on an outpatient basis under local anaesthetic or daycase basis under general anaesthesia depending on the extent of the varicose veins present.

Under ultrasound guidance, a thin laser is inserted through a tiny entry point, usually near the knee. Laser energy is delivered in short pulses to seal the faulty vein so that blood cannot flow through it. The procedure takes about 40 minutes per leg. You may require some additional treatment for management of any residual smaller varicosities in the lower leg. Walking immediately after the procedure is encouraged.



EVLA has a very good safety record. It is over 95% successful at obliterating the cause of varicosities.

Recurrence of varicosities after EVLA occurs in less than 10% of cases. Side-effects from EVLA are minor but do expect some mild discomfort

You will have to wear compression stockings for two weeks after the treatment and we advise that you do not fly for at least three weeks but otherwise you can get on with your life as normal with minimal time off work.

Foam Sclerotherapy

Liquid sclerotherapy (injection treatment) is still the treatment of choice for thread veins but for larger veins the results of just injecting liquids are not good.

Some doctors even use foam as a substitute for major surgical stripping but EVLA is more effective and durable for larger veins.



What Are Thread Veins?

Thread veins are commonly known as spider veins. The veins can vary from fine red marks to larger purple or deep blue veins. They can cause a significant cosmetic embarrassment and many women will not wear skirts in the summer months.

The reason why people develop thread veins on the legs is not fully understood but important associations are hereditary, pregnancy and hormonal factors. They may also become more obvious after mid-life because the skin has become thinner.

There are many different types of thread vein and they are very often associated with underlying (visible or hidden) varicose veins. In order to get the best results from treatment it is very important to have a proper assessment of the whole vein system in the leg to see if there is any connection between the superficial thread veins and the deeper veins.

Combination treatments for thread veins including treatment of varicose veins may therefore be required.

For best results, a full venous assessment is recommended, and this is beyond the scope of most cosmetic nurse practitioners or beauty therapists performing thread vein treatments.



Microsclerotherapy Treatment for Thread Veins

After treating any underlying varicose veins or superficial venous reflux, an injection technique called “Microsclerotherapy” is used to treat the thread veins directly. A non-toxic chemical is injected through a very fine needle directly into the vein. This irritates the lining of the vein causing the walls to stick together and prevent blood flowing through the vessel.



The treatment takes about 30 minutes and you will experience only minimal discomfort. The walls of the thread vein or spider vein that have been damaged by the injection are slowly removed by the body’s natural defence mechanisms over a period of months. Once the vein has been injected it can take between two weeks to six months for it to completely disappear. On rare occasions it can take up to a year. Compression stockings are worn for 2 weeks to reduce the amount of bruising and discolouration. Normal activities can be resumed immediately.

The number of treatments necessary will vary according to the patient and the extent of the condition. To allow the outcome of previous microsclerotherapy sessions to become clearly visible, there must be six weeks between treatments. Patients find that over time a few more thread veins may appear and it is common to require an annual or bi-annual ‘tidy-up’ visit.

What Should You Do Next?

Once you have decided to seek advice, it is essential to have a formal consultation with one of our specialists, who will be in a position to answer all your questions. A referral letter from your GP is essential if you have insurance and a good idea even if you do not. It is good practice to make sure your GP knows of any planned treatment.

For further information or to arrange a consultation, please call Spencer Private Hospitals on **01843 234 555** or email **enquiries@spencerhospitals.com**

Insured Patients

The excellent quality of care provided by Spencer Private Hospitals are recognised by all the major private health insurance companies such as BUPA, WPA, AXA-PPP, Standard Life and AVIVA. Depending on your level of cover, the fees for varicose vein treatments are usually fully reimbursed. You are strongly advised to check with your insurance company before undergoing any treatment to check your level of cover and to be issued with an authorisation number. Please ensure that you have been referred by your family doctor and when informing your insurance company please quote the GMC number of your consultant which you can obtain from us.

Thank you to Mr George Tsavellas for providing Spencer Private Hospitals with this information.

Margate

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