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## **Sclerotherapy Information**

Treatment of varicose veins with sclerotherapy is a common, low risk procedure that is performed for many people to help them reduce the risk of ulcer formation or to minimise various unpleasant sensations such as pain, swelling or itchiness - or simply to improve the cosmetic appearance of their legs. It is a generally safe procedure, but no surgical procedure is risk free. Reading and following the information and instructions below can help you minimise these already low risks as well as optimising your outcome from your procedure.

Sclerotherapy is used in some patients to treat the main incompetent veins of the leg, the cause of varicose veins, alongside the treatment of their more visible varicose veins or spider veins. Other people will only have treatment of their visible varicose veins, either because their main causative veins have been already treated or because those veins do not require treatment.

Prior to consenting to treatment, please ensure you have read and understood the information leaflet from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons regarding the risks of your procedure and alternative treatment options. You will have been provided with this at the time of your appointment with Dr Thurston. Please do take the time to ask any questions you may have prior to embarking on surgery.

### **Sclerotherapy – the basics**

#### **What is Foam Sclerotherapy?**

Ultrasound-guided foam sclerotherapy is a minimally invasive treatment for varicose veins in the lower legs. It involves injecting a special foam sclerosant into the affected veins under ultrasound guidance. This foam irritates the inner lining of the vein, causing it to collapse and eventually be reabsorbed by the body.

#### **What to Expect During the Procedure**

You will lie on a treatment bed while Dr Thurston uses ultrasound to locate the affected veins. A fine needle is then inserted into the vein, and the foam is carefully injected. You may feel slight pressure or discomfort during the injection. Depending on the size, number and location of veins being treated you may require several of these small injections. The entire procedure usually takes around 20-30 minutes, depending on how many veins are being treated. Compression stockings are applied afterwards to aid in vein closure and healing.

#### **Aspiration (Blood Release) and Top up Treatment**

At your follow-up appointments (typically 2 weeks after any treatment), Dr Thurston may perform aspiration, also known as "blood release." This involves using a needle to remove trapped blood from the treated vein. This step helps reduce inflammation, improve cosmetic outcomes, and helps prevent complications such as hard lumps or pigmentation. Following this step, Dr Thurston may proceed to treat any veins that have not been successfully closed during your previous appointment – most people require this "top-up" treatment, although some may not.

#### **Interval ultrasounds**

Prior to embarking on the initial treatment, and after each treatment session, Dr Thurston will request a for you to have a detailed ultrasound to identify which veins require treatment and to confirm which veins have been successfully treated. These scans help guide the need and location for top-up treatment.

## **Risks and Side Effects**

Complications are uncommon but may include allergic reactions, skin staining, clots in deeper veins (rare), or inflammation and bruising; people who suffer from migraines may have a migraine triggered by sclerotherapy. If you have an undiagnosed “hole in your heart” there is a very small possibility of you getting symptoms in-keeping with a stroke – if these happen they can last only a very short while and improve without any treatment, but incredibly rarely symptoms may be permanent. Dr Thurston will discuss any specific risks relevant to your health.

## **Preparation in the week prior to your procedure:**

**Medications:** All medications, including blood thinners, should continue throughout your treatment course. If you are on strong blood thinners e.g. Warfarin, Apixaban (Eliquis), Rivaroxaban (Xarelto), or Dabigatran (Pradaxa), please let Dr Thurston know as he may need to adjust the dose of sclerotherapy to achieve the best result.

**Stockings:** Please make sure you have been sized for and purchased your thigh high compression stockings. Dr Thurston will provide you with a letter to enable you to obtain these, along with suggestions of where they can be sourced. You will need to bring your stockings to each appointment.

**Ultrasound appointments:** Ensure that your post-treatment ultrasounds are booked, to ensure that we do not have to delay your treatment sessions due to not having an up to date ultrasound available.

## **On the day of your procedure:**

**Fasting:** You do not need to fast for this procedure.

**Clothing:** Please arrive with loose fitting clothing, particularly for your legs. Baggy shorts or skirts or track suit bottoms are most appropriate.

**Pre-intervention:** Before starting treatment Dr Thurston will check your consent form and answer any questions you may have. Dr Thurston will ask you to point out any veins or areas that are most concerning to you. You will be asked to remove clothing from the lower half of your body with the exception of underwear, we will provide you with a sheet for modesty. Depending on the location of your veins, Dr Thurston may ask you to lie on your back, front or side. Please let Dr Thurston know if you have any difficulty with getting in to any of these positions or if they are painful for you.

**Post-intervention:** Dr Thurston will place your stocking on your leg, it is important that you do not try to help. He will also move your ankle to encourage the sclerotherapy to spread through the veins and reduce the risk of DVT. You should go for a 20-minute walk immediately following your procedure, before driving away from your appointment, to minimise the risk of a deep vein blood clot (DVT).

## **Post-intervention instructions:**

**Stockings:** Wearing compression stockings after sclerotherapy is a key component of the procedure and pivotal to its long-term success. Stockings are to be worn all day and night for the first 3 days. Thereafter you should wear your stocking all day, putting your stocking on shortly after waking in the morning and keeping it on until you are going to bed in the evening. You may also remove your stocking for showering. Depending on the location of your surgical avulsions, these stockings may be below or above the knee.

**Pain relief:** Take paracetamol (Panadol) or ibuprofen (Nurofen) regularly for the first 48hrs after surgery and then as required. If you have allergies or other medical conditions that preclude you from taking Panadol or Nurofen, please discuss this with Dr Thurston. Pain relief other than Panadol is rarely required.

**Mobility:** Once you are discharged from hospital, you should make sure you walk twice a day for at least 20 minutes each walk. Try to avoid excessive stairs or hills and walk at a comfortable pace. While you can continue sporting

activities throughout your treatment course, keeping your stockings on is important and activities such as swimming should be limited. Discuss this with Dr Thurston if you have any questions.

**Flights:** The immobility and dehydration associated with flying can increase the risk of blood clots after venous interventions. Avoid all flying for 2 weeks after sclerotherapy unless absolutely essential. After two weeks' flights of less than 4 hours' duration can be considered. Longer haul flying should wait until 6 to 8 weeks after surgery.

**Bruising:** It is common to get some bruising on your leg that will generally increase over the first week. This usually goes away entirely by itself; however some people do have some persistent skin staining with a bruise like appearance. If you wish, from 10 days after intervention you can obtain some Hirudoid cream over the counter and gently massage the Hirudoid cream into the bruised areas, avoiding any incisions. The bruising will gradually improve but may last 6 to 8 weeks or longer

**Showering:** You may remove your stocking for showering.

**Return to work:** Most people can return to work the same day or the following day post sclerotherapy. Please let Dr Thurston know at the time of your appointment if you require a medical certificate.

## **Follow Up:**

**6 week ultrasound:** 6 to 8 weeks following the your sclerotherapy you will have an in-depth ultrasound to assess the success of treatment and to determine which, if any, areas of your veins are suitable or require further treatment. Most people do not require further treatment at this time, particularly if they have continued with stocking therapy.

**In person consultation:** Following your 6-week ultrasound, Dr Thurston will see you in the rooms to assess your veins and determine if you wish for or need any further treatment. The results of the ultrasound will be discussed then

**Concerns:** If you have any concerns, please contact our rooms immediately on 08 8232 1293. In particular, if your wounds are increasingly red or painful or if your leg feels hot to touch. If our rooms are unattended, and you feel you require urgent assessment, please attend the Emergency Department at St Andrews Hospital.

## **Treatment Course Overview**

One of the main advantages of sclerotherapy over other treatment modalities for varicose veins is that it can be performed during a standard appointment in the rooms and does not require admission to hospital – many people can have the procedure and return to work the same day. One of the disadvantages of sclerotherapy is that, in most people, multiple appointments are required to achieve the desired result.

Prior to embarking on sclerotherapy, Dr Thurston will have obtained a detailed ultrasound of the veins in your affected leg or legs and will have had an appointment with you discussing your treatment options. If you elect to proceed with sclerotherapy you will then be booked in for a full treatment course which occurs over a 6 to 8 week time frame. This treatment course includes being booked in for both your treatment sessions and your post-treatment ultrasound assessments.

Typical treatment schedules are explained on the pages following. These can be tailored to your requirements.

# **Sclerotherapy: Treatment Course Outline for One Leg**

## **1. Starting Treatment**

- **Day 1:** Appointment with Dr Thurston
  - Ultrasound-guided foam sclerotherapy
  - Compression stocking applied
  - 20-minute walk after treatment
  - *Please note: Published sclerotherapy fee applies for this visit*

## **2. Daily Care (Days 2 to 14):**

- Wear thigh-high compression stockings 24/7 for 3 days then during the day only
- Take a 20-minute (or more) walk every day

## **3. First Follow-Up**

- **Day 10-14:** Post-treatment ultrasound
- **Day 14:** Appointment with Dr Thurston
  - Aspiration procedure (if needed)
  - Additional foam sclerotherapy - “top-up treatment” (if required)
  - *This visit is bulk billed*

### **If no top-up treatment is needed:**

- Continue wearing thigh-high stockings in the day for 1 week
- Then switch to below-knee stockings during the day until Post-treatment follow up review

## **4. Daily Care (if top-up treatment needed):**

- **Days 14 to 28:** 24/7 thigh-high compression stockings for 3 days, then in the day only
- Take a 20-minute (or more) walk every day

## **5. Second Follow-Up (if top-up treatment needed):**

- **Day 24-28:** Second ultrasound
- **Day 28:** Appointment with Dr Thurston
  - Aspiration procedure if needed
  - Discussion of any further treatment if required
  - *This visit is bulk billed*

## **6. Post-treatment Follow-Up Appointment**

- **6 to 8 weeks after completing treatment:**
  - Final review appointment with Dr Thurston
  - *Please note: Standard review appointment fee applies for this visit*

## **Important Notes:**

- Follow the compression stocking schedule to ensure best results
- Keep up with daily walking to minimise the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis
- Make sure to attend all ultrasound and review appointments

# **Sclerotherapy: Treatment Course Outline for Two Legs**

## **1. Starting Treatment**

- **Day 1:** Appointment with Dr Thurston
  - Foam sclerotherapy for one leg ("first leg")
  - Compression stocking applied
  - 20-minute walk after treatment
  - *Fee applies for this visit*

## **2. Daily Care (Days 2 to 14):**

- Wear thigh-high stockings 24/7 for 3 days, then wear during the day only
- Walk for 20 minutes daily

## **3. First Follow-Up**

- **Day 10–14:** Get a post-treatment ultrasound
- **Day 14:** Appointment with Dr Thurston
  - Aspiration (if needed)
  - Top-up treatment for first leg (if required)
  - Initial treatment of second leg may be performed
  - *Fee applies for this visit if second leg treated, otherwise bulk billed*

### **If no top-up treatment of your first leg is required:**

- Continue thigh-high stockings during the day for 1 week
- Then switch to below-knee stockings during the day until the post-treatment follow-up appointment

## **4. Daily Care (Days 14 to 28):**

- For any leg treated at "**First Follow-Up**" wear thigh-high stockings 24/7 for 3 days, then only during the day
- Continue daily 20-minute walks

## **5. Second Follow-Up:**

- **Day 24–28:** Get a post-treatment ultrasound
- **Day 28:** Appointment with Dr Thurston
  - Aspiration and/or top-up treatment if needed
  - Initial treatment for second leg if not already performed
  - *Fee applies for this visit if second leg treated for the first time, otherwise bulk billed*

## **6. Ongoing Treatment (If Top-Up or sclerotherapy treatment at second follow up):**

- **Days 28 to 42:**
  - Wear thigh-high stockings 24/7 for 3 days, then during the day only
  - Continue 20-minute daily walks

## **7. Third Follow-up**

- **Day 38-42:** Get a post-treatment ultrasound
- **Day 42:** Appointment with Dr Thurston
  - Aspiration and/or top-up treatment if required
  - *Bulk billed*

## **8. Post-Treatment Follow-Up appointment**

- **6 to 8 weeks after completing treatment:**
  - Review appointment with Dr Thurston
  - *Please note: Standard review appointment fee applies for this visit*

## **Important Notes:**

- Following the stocking and walking schedule will improve results
- Ultrasounds are essential for tracking progress
- Some visits are bulk billed while others incur a fee
- Let the clinic know if you experience discomfort or issues between visits