

What is Sclerotherapy?

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Sclerotherapy is an office-based procedure used to treat unwanted spider, reticular and varicose veins. The procedure involves an injection that causes the vein to develop into scar tissue and disappear over time. The blood that would normally go through this vein is rerouted to healthy veins.

At Michigan Medicine, we use an FDA approved medication called Asclera® (polidocanol) to treat these veins. The treatment plan typically requires 3-5, 1-hour sessions. Generally, the treatments are spaced 6-8 weeks apart for the best outcome.

How will I know if I am a candidate for sclerotherapy?

You will meet with a vascular provider for a consultation. Together, you will discuss the risks, benefits, and treatment expectations. If sclerotherapy is the best approach to meet your needs, your provider will help you create a custom treatment plan.

You are not eligible for sclerotherapy if you are:

- Pregnant or you recently had a child
 - You must wait at least 3 months after giving birth to be considered
- Breastfeeding

Will my insurance pay for sclerotherapy?

- Insurance companies do not provide coverage for sclerotherapy when it is performed for “cosmetic” reasons (to improve appearance only).
- Some insurance companies may cover the procedure for bleeding spider, reticular or varicose veins that cause pain even with the use of compression stockings.

Please contact your insurance provider to verify they will cover the procedure. You can also call the Michigan Medicine Patient Financial Counselors at (877) 326-9155 for additional help.

What are the risks of sclerotherapy?

At the time of your consultation and again on the day of your procedure, your provider will review all of the possible risks of sclerotherapy. The most common risks include bruising, darkened skin in the form of lines or spots and the need for further treatments.

Temporary side effects may include:

- Larger veins may feel lumpy or hard for several months before improving
- Raised, red areas at the injection sites (should disappear within a few days)
- Brown lines or raised spots on the skin at the injection site (usually they disappear within 3-6 months)
- Bruising around the injection site (may last days or weeks)

How do I prepare for my procedure?

What are my medication instructions?

- Take your regular medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- There are certain medications that you should avoid. Please let us know if you are taking the antibiotic Tetracycline or Minocycline. It may cause a blue staining of your skin if taken 7 to 10 days before or after the procedure. Your procedure will be postponed to avoid this.

How do I shower and get ready for my procedure?

1. On the morning of your procedure, use a freshly-laundered washcloth and wash your legs with a mild soap.
 - **Do not** apply lotions, creams or ointments after washing your legs.

2. Bring the compression stockings you purchased with you on the day of your procedure.

What will my visit be like?

1. Sclerotherapy is performed by a provider in the Vascular Surgery outpatient clinics. When you arrive, your provider will meet with you to review the risks and benefits of the procedure. You will be asked to sign an informed consent form.
2. Next, you will receive a pair of blue treatment shorts to wear during the procedure. Photographs of your legs will be taken to track your progress and show before and after results.
3. You will be asked to relax on the treatment bed. Your skin will be cleansed before your procedure.
4. During the procedure, the leg is elevated while the provider uses a very fine needle to inject the vein(s) with the liquid solution.
5. After the injection(s), each site is covered with a cotton ball dressing covered by tape.

How long will the sclerotherapy treatment last?

The sclerotherapy procedure takes about 30 - 45 minutes, but the exact length of time depends on the number and size of the veins being treated. Your total appointment time will be about 1 hour.

What happens after the treatment?

Once your treatment is finished, we will help you put on your compression stockings. After you leave the treatment room, you will be asked to walk in the lobby for 10 minutes. You will need to wear your compression stocking for 2 weeks after your treatment. Follow these instructions for use at home:

- **Days 1-3:** Wear your stockings day and night. Remove during exercise and bathing.

- **Days 4-14:** Wear your stockings during the day. Remove during exercise, bathing, and at bedtime.

What kind of discomfort will I feel after my procedure?

You may feel some minor stinging or cramps when the needle is inserted into your veins. The treated areas may feel sore for a few days following the procedure.

You may take Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen to help with the discomfort. You may also apply warm packs for 30 minutes, 3 times a day.

What are my activity instructions?

Activities:

- Walk every day for at least 10 minutes. Walking is important to prevent blood clots from forming.
- Elevate your legs above your heart with pillows or a footrest when resting.

Restrictions:

- Avoid performing strenuous exercise, such as weight lifting, jogging or aerobic exercise, for 1 week after the procedure.

How do I care for my procedure sites?

- You will leave the clinic with a cotton ball dressing(s) taped in place with paper tape to your affected leg.
- Keep the dressings on overnight.
- You may shower in the morning after your procedure. Follow these steps as you take your first shower:
 1. Take off your cotton ball dressings.
 2. Shower and wash your injection site(s) with mild soap every day.

3. Pat dry and leave open to air. You do not need to reapply a dressing to your treatment site(s).
4. Put on your prescription compression stockings.
 - **Do not** put use any strong soaps, creams, powders or ointments on your injection site(s) until they heal.
 - **Do not** sit in a bath tub, hot tub or pool for 1 week.

When do I need to seek emergency care?

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you have any of the symptoms listed below:

- Sudden chest pain
- Shortness of breath not relieved by rest

When do I need to call my doctor?

- You have signs of a **blood clot**:
 - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh or groin
 - Redness or swelling in your leg or groin area
- You have signs of **infection**:
 - Red streaks leading from your injection sites
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth redness
 - Foul smelling drainage from your injection sites
 - Under the tongue temperature above 101 Fahrenheit
- Sudden swelling in your legs or ankles
- Small open sores at your injection site(s)

What is the number to call?

- Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm:
 - Call **(888) 287-1082** and ask to speak to the Vascular Surgery Nurse.
- After 4:30pm or on weekends or holidays:

- Call (734) 936-6267 and ask the hospital operator to page the Vascular Surgery Medical Resident on call. You will receive a call back from the Resident.

Will I need further treatment?

All patients require more than 1 treatment and the average is 3-5 treatments. This depends on the size and extent of the spider, reticular, or varicose veins. You will notice the least improvement after the first treatment, but after each session we will re-assess if the treatment is working and if you need further treatments.

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