

## TREATMENT OF SPIDER VEINS – PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

### RISKS AND INFORMATION GUIDE

Spider veins are very small blood vessels located in the outer layer of skin. The color is either red or blue based upon the capillary anatomy. These vessels are often unsightly in appearance, and sometimes cause discomfort in the skin. Reticular veins are a little larger and are located slightly deeper in the skin. They are blue in color and often are the feeder source to the spider veins. Both veins are treated to improve skin appearance and to eliminate skin discomfort if present. Modern treatments are effective to remove these veins from the skin. The following instructions will help prepare you for treatment and assure the best results possible.

Spider veins are caused primarily by genetic inheritance, but may be associated with an underlying vein insufficiency problem. Excess pressure in the larger saphenous veins can be transmitted to the skin, and may lead to dilated reticular and spider veins. The underlying problem is best treated first, in order to reduce the chance that more spider veins will return at a later date. When the cause is corrected, only a few spider veins will appear in subsequent years.

Your initial consultation and examination may include an ultrasound evaluation of the anatomy and physiology of your leg veins. This thorough assessment assures that you will receive proper treatment, not only to eliminate the spider veins but also correct any underlying problem which may contribute to their appearance.

**Once you are scheduled for spider vein treatments, the following preparation will help give you the best results:**

1. Spider veins treatments **do not require anesthesia** of any kind, therefore you may eat and drink as you would in any normal day.
2. If you have needle fright or wish a mild sedative, we can provide that for you. However, we would then require someone to drive you home after your treatment. In general, a request for a sedative is very rare.
3. The shaved leg is a little easier to treat, allowing better visibility of the small veins. We also recommend that men shave the area to be treated. **Please shave at least 24 hours before the procedure.**
4. Oils and creams make the treatments a little more difficult, and we recommend that you do not apply them to your legs on the day of treatment.
5. **Some medications should be avoided for several days prior to treatment.** If you are on a blood thinner, the doctor will advise medication adjustments as necessary. Iron supplements, or vitamins with iron, also should be stopped at least one week before treatment.

Please be sure we know all the medicines you take, including the use of “natural” meds so that we can advise you regarding your treatment preparation. Avoid aspirin (unless prescribed by your physician) for one week prior to scheduled treatment.

**Dr. Dworkin will advise you about stopping and resuming blood thinning medicines, if applicable.**

### **Who should not have spider vein treatments?**

1. Do not have treatments if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
2. If your ability to walk is limited, you should not have treatment.
3. If you are prone to blood clots, or have a known blood clot disorder, you should not have spider vein treatments.
4. Anyone who has a severe needle fright will not do well with spider vein treatment.
5. If you schedule treatments within a few weeks of getting a dark tan, this can make it difficult for us to see the veins. This includes a spray tan or self-tanning lotions.
6. The use of vitamin supplements (especially Vitamin E) is discouraged while undergoing Sclerotherapy as this may cause increased bruising. A daily multivitamin is okay.

### **What are the treatment methods?**

Spider veins are best treated by a technique called sclerotherapy. This requires the injection of a solution into the abnormal veins. The solution damages the inside lining of the vein, causing the vein initially to clot, and then to scar closed. Once adequately scarred, or sclerosed, the vein will not re-open and will not reoccur. The sclerosing solutions most commonly used at Vein Specialists of Tampa are excellent modern solutions which give very good results and minimum side effects.

The injections are perceived by most patients, to be very tolerable, with little or no pain. The needles are very small (30 gauge), and often cannot be felt as they penetrate the small veins. However, many injections are often required, and one must be prepared to accept the treatment. The solutions will sometimes cause a mild burning sensation which lasts several minutes. If the discomfort seems excessive, you will receive immediate cold compresses.

We try to treat veins in both legs, both front and back, at each treatment session. Hopefully there will be fewer veins at each subsequent treatment.

### **Recommendations for post-treatment care:**

1. Following treatments, you may be asked to rest with your legs elevated for 10-15 minutes before you leave our office.
2. Immediately after treatment, please walk around for about 15 minutes. This helps distribute the solutions and dilute any solution in the deep veins.
3. You may drive home and otherwise participate in your normal daily activities.
4. Avoid soaking in a hot bath for at least 48 hours as heat causes dilation of the blood vessels. As stated above, a shower is okay.
5. Please avoid high impact sports and activities for 2 days after treatment. Sometimes you will be asked to wait a longer interval, depending upon the size of veins treated.

### What are the expected results?

We hope to ultimately achieve at least 80% or better resolution of all spider veins. This usually requires several treatments and as long as one year or more. If there are a few scattered spider veins, these usually can be eliminated within 6 months or less. If there are a lot of blue spider veins, the treatment may take one year or longer to achieve desired results. You will be advised of our expectations at the time of your consultation.

### Are there complications possible?

As with any medical treatment, complications can and do occasionally occur. Often these are referred to more accurately as side effects of spider vein treatments. At Vein Specialists of Tampa, we have worked hard to select the best treatment options available today which cause the least known adverse side effects. Some of the side effects possible are :

1. **Pigmentation** = blood pigment will often stain the skin after spider vein treatments. The vein will be eliminated, but a brown discoloration will be present where the vein was once visible. These pigments usually go away almost entirely within one year, often within 6-8 weeks. Sometimes we prescribe a bleach cream to help remove the stain. Iron medication is thought to contribute to an increased incidence of pigment formation.
2. **Bruising** = common after spider vein treatments, and will typically resolve within 6 to 8 weeks.
3. **Matting** = In a small percentage of the injections (3-5%), patients will develop a network of tiny, pink, blood vessels at a treatment site. This is referred to as “**matting**” or “**talengiectic matting**”. Sometimes this disappears over time without further treatment, but it can leave a permanent blemish.
4. **Skin numbness** = nearby skin nerves are sometimes stunned by the treatments. This will typically resolve within a few months.
5. **Skin ulceration** = sometimes the solution will damage the skin excessively and cause a small ulcer. The ulcer will take 6 to 8 weeks to heal, and may require minor skin wound care such as ointments and light dressings.
6. **Veins resistant to treatment, and new veins developing** = some veins are more difficult to treat and will not disappear, and occasionally new veins will develop at treatment sites. Both of these problems are rare, and can be treated successfully by additional injections and changing solutions.
7. **Itching and redness** = will develop at treatment sites on occasion. This is not serious, and can be treated with topical steroid creams , and anti-histamines if the itching is prolonged.
8. **Ankle and leg swelling** = occurs fairly commonly after injection treatments, especially if ankle and foot veins are treated. This will disappear usually within a few months.
9. **Blood clots, or phlebitis, will develop in some of the larger treated veins.** This is normal and is the desired result of treatment. The veins will feel lumpy or knot-like, and are often associated with tenderness and redness of the skin. This too will go away within two to four months or longer, and is treated with ibuprofen or other anti-inflammatory medication. Remember, your legs will look worse before they look better. Bruising is normal and may take several weeks to fade.
10. **Allergic reaction** = Allergic reaction to the medicines used for Sclerotherapy, is extremely rare and it is safely administered to thousands of patients each year.



**The cost of treatment and insurance coverage can be summarized as follows:**

1. Spider vein treatments are considered cosmetic and are **not covered by insurance.**
2. **Spider vein treatment is \$180 per session.** A single treatment session usually takes 30-45 minutes.
3. At your consultation, the physician will provide you with an estimate, regarding the number of treatments. The interval between treatments is typically 2-4 weeks.
4. **Please note our policy regarding appointment cancellations. Except for true emergencies, we respectfully request you notify us 72 hours prior to an appointment cancellation.**

Thank you for seeking consultation and treatment with Vein Specialists of Tampa. Our efforts are to offer you the best and safest treatment options available today. If you have any questions, please call or email for answers and we will be pleased to respond. It is very important, to be patient as we observe the results of treatment, often several months must pass before we see the results we all desire. We look forward to working with you as we provide specialty care for your vein problems.

Sincerely,

The office staff of Vein Specialists of Tampa & Gary Dworkin, M.D.