



KAISER PERMANENTE®
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Sclerotherapy (Spider Vein Therapy)

Leg spider veins are dilated small vessels that have a red or bluish color. Although they carry blood, they are not necessary for your circulation. If they are felt to be unsightly they are treated by a cosmetic procedure called sclerotherapy. During sclerotherapy, one of several kinds of solutions is injected with a very fine needle directly into the blood vessel. The solution irritates the lining of the vessel causing it to stick together and the blood to clot. Over a period of 2-8 weeks, the vessel will turn into scar tissue and become lighter or may disappear altogether. Occasionally, larger varicose veins are underneath spider veins. In such cases, you may require evaluation by a vascular surgeon for optimal treatment. Lasers may also be used to treat certain leg veins.

Your first appointment will be to medically evaluate your leg vein problems, discuss your particular needs and concerns, and share with you some of the treatment associated risks, all so that we will be ready to safely proceed with your first full treatment at your second visit. Multiple treatments are necessary. The number of treatments depends on the severity of your leg veins, their response to treatment, and your treatment goals. You are booked for a 30 minute appointment; however injection does not last for 30 minutes. Once the treatment is completed, we will help you get a dressing or support hose on, and you can resume normal activities. You may be asked to wear dressings or support hose for at least 12-48 hours. **You should not have any form of sclerotherapy when you are pregnant or for six months after delivery.**

What are the risks of this procedure?

- **Hyperpigmentation:** This is skin discoloration that overlies the treated area and may vary from tan to dark brown to purple, like a bruise. It usually resolves within a year, but in some cases it is permanent. It is very common and is probably due to the leakage of blood through the vein walls into the skin. The compression stockings or dressings worn immediately afterwards will help to minimize this.
- **Development of groups of new fine red blood vessels near the sites of injection of larger vessels:** About 30% of patients develop these; most disappear by themselves; some require additional treatment with laser or injection. Some are permanent.
- **Pain/swelling:** The treatment may cause burning or stinging at the sites of injection and/or muscle cramps. Swelling of the ankles and/or feet may also occur. Compression dressings and stockings as well as walking around will minimize this.
- **Ulceration:** If some of the solution we use escapes the blood vessels into the surrounding skin, a sore may appear. It is necessary to inform your doctor immediately if this occurs. This usually heals over 4-6 weeks and will usually leave a scar.

- **Bruising, redness and swelling:** This is very common near or around the treatment areas and will subside over 1-10 days.
- **Blisters and pimples:** These are not due to the sclerotherapy, but are from the tape and dressings that may be applied for additional compression. Please call if these are significant, but in general, gentle cleansing with soap and water and leaving the area dry will help these to clear up.
- **Appearance of new veins:** The venous system of your legs is always changing, so over time, new veins will appear. You can make additional appointments when you have enough new ones to treat. If your initial evaluation determines significant large vein or deep vein involvement, we may encourage a visit with one of our general surgeons to evaluate you for either vein stripping or sclerotherapy in their department prior to our treating the superficial skin veins.
- **Lumps in injected veins:** Small, dark bumps may occur after injection. These are small blood clots. They are not dangerous. Your doctor removes them about a week after appearance with a small needle to prevent hyperpigmentation. A painful condition called phlebitis of the leg vein may occur if blood clots are larger and become inflamed. Notify your doctor if you develop any lump after treatment, painful or not.
- **Fainting, difficulty breathing, generalized hives:** These are rare, but please let your doctor know if you are feeling faint, notice any shortness of breath, and/or start to itch all over during your treatment.

Are there any long-term complications with this procedure?

True long-term complications such as blood clot developing in your deep vein or a clot going to your lungs are extremely rare but can occur.

**These services are provided on a fee basis and are not part of your Health plan benefits.
Medically necessary care is provided under Health Plan benefits.**