



Ultrasound Guided Foam Sclerotherapy / Varithena Before & After Care Instructions

Ultrasound-Guided Foam Sclerotherapy

Ultrasound-guided foam sclerotherapy allows your doctor to treat backwards flow (or "reflux") in superficial veins that are not visible to the naked eye but are causing symptoms including pain, swelling, and varicose veins. Ultrasound allows us to localize the unhealthy veins, inject the medication precisely, and guide the medication towards areas of varicose veins. This minimally invasive treatment will be done in our office and does not require any anesthesia. A fine needle is placed into the vein and a sclerosant foam medication (polidocanol) is injected. The brand names are Asclera and Varithena. The medication irritates the vein wall, which causes it to stop flowing, then eventually close down completely. The blood continues to return to the heart through other healthy veins.

Preparing for your treatment

- You will check in 30 minutes prior to your scheduled procedure and sign your consent for treatment, at which point we will set up for the sterile procedure.
- **Bring your prescribed medical grade compression stockings with you to your appointment.** You will wear them after treatment. Please try your stockings on now to confirm proper fit.
- We do not recommend shaving your legs before the procedure because the compression stockings may cause ingrown hairs.
- **On the morning of the procedure, shower and use antibacterial soap to wash your leg.**
- Bring a pair of loose-fitting pants to your appointment (your leg will be wrapped with an ACE bandage). You should also bring extra underwear as we will need to use ultrasound gel near the groin.
- We recommend you eat a light meal before you arrive.
- Our procedure rooms are equipped with TVs and Netflix, but you are welcome to bring a book or iPad to use during the procedure.
- Please notify our office if you are scheduled to have any type of medical procedure or surgery two weeks before or after your treatment.
- If you become pregnant or are breastfeeding, please notify us, as your treatment will need to be postponed.
- **If you must reschedule, we kindly request that you contact the office at (858) 550-0330 at least 48 hours prior to your procedure, as we must open sealed sterile supplies prior to your arrival. No-shows may be charged \$150 for sterile supplies which cannot be re-used.**

Medications

- If you have asthma, please bring your inhaler to your appointment.
- If your La Jolla Vein & Vascular provider recommended a prophylactic blood thinner (e.g. Xarelto, Eliquis, or Lovenox) or an antihistamine (e.g. Zyrtec or Claritin), please take your first dose at least two hours prior to our procedure.
- If you were prescribed a blood thinner during treatment, continue to take it until your final ultrasound 3-7 days after the last treatment unless instructed otherwise.
- If you already take aspirin or another blood thinner, you will continue it during treatment unless instructed otherwise.

The ultrasound-guided foam sclerotherapy procedure:

- You will check in 10-15 minutes prior to your appointment, then change into disposable shorts supplied by our office.
- We will clean your leg(s) with alcohol. We will then use ultrasound to “map” the veins to be treated. Each vein will be accessed with a tiny needle through which the foam medication is injected.
- You will flex the foot prior to each injection and then do calf exercises (pointing and flexing the foot) between injections.
- After the treatment is complete, we will elevate your legs on a wedge pillow for 10-15 minutes while you continue 20 calf exercises per minute.
- We will then help you into your thigh-high compression stocking, then you will walk around the medical campus for 30 minutes before getting in the car.

Medical Compression Stockings

- **Wearing compression stockings is a part of your vein treatment.** Your veins will not only heal faster, but compression stockings reduce the risk of complications
- **You will wear compression stockings continuously for 72 hours (3 days).** You can remove them to take a quick cool shower the day after treatment or you can shower in the stockings.
- **After the 72 hours, you will wear the stocking for an additional week during the day** (for a total of 10 days after each procedure). The 10 days will start over after each treatment session.
- For comfort, you can fold down the silicone band at the top of the stocking at night.
- If your stockings are slipping down, try wiping down the silicone beads with rubbing alcohol to make them tacky again. We also have glue available for purchase at our office to help them stay up.
- If you experience numbness, tingling, or discomfort on the foot, you can remove the stocking at night, then put it back on first thing in the morning. Sometimes the stocking has to be cut to relieve pressure. Be sure to NOT cut the toe band of your stocking as this will cause the toes of your stocking to roll. Instead, cut a 1/2 to 1 inch long slit on the side and in the middle of the foot area. First make a small cut; you can make it bigger if needed.

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Activity

- You can resume your usual activities on the day of treatment. You can return to work the same day as long as you are able to walk and/or do calf exercises every hour.
- **Walk at least 30 minutes twice daily** for 2 weeks after each treatment session. There is no limit to how much walking you can do and inclines are okay.
- Avoid pooling of blood in the legs by keeping the calf muscles active with heel-raises, pointing/flexing the feet, and walking. Avoid high heels.
- When you are sitting, the more you elevate your legs the better.
- **Avoid running, spinning, other strenuous exercise, and exercise in hot environments for 2 weeks** after each treatment session
- Avoid hot tubs and leg massages for 2-3 weeks after treatment.

Travel

- Avoid long trips for the next 3 weeks. For car trips over an hour, get out every 45 minutes and walk for 10 minutes.
- During airplane trips, get up to walk around frequently, and flex your ankles every few minutes.
- Wear your compression stockings during travel.

What to Expect Following Treatment

- After treatment of dilated veins close to the skin (spider veins), it is normal for those veins to itch for a few hours.
- Bruising at the injection sites is normal and will fade over about two weeks. You may apply arnica or Recova cream to those areas.
- Varicose veins may become firm and blue after treatment, then fade over a period of weeks. The skin overlying larger varicose veins may develop brown "hyperpigmentation" as the blood pigments within those veins are absorbed by the body. This can take up to a year to fade. Avoid exposing that skin to the sun until the pigmentation fades, so that it does not become permanent.
- **Aching and slight swelling is normal in the legs for several days after treatment**, and generally improves with the following:
 - Walking 10-30 minutes is the most effective treatment.
 - Ice packs (or a bag of frozen peas or ice) over the sore veins, 15 minutes at a time, several times a day. Protect your skin by placing a thin washcloth under the ice pack.
 - Anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen sodium (Aleve), taken as directed on the bottle. If you cannot take those medications, acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be used.
 - For severe pain, or pain that worsens with walking, promptly call the office.
- Treated veins will look worse before they look better. Initially, large veins may feel tender, firm, and/or lumpy. **Please point out any lumpy and/or tender areas to the doctor.** The whole healing process may take several weeks to months.

Adverse Effects

- Although rare, sclerotherapy can be accompanied with unwanted effects including: trapped blood (a small amount of blood becomes trapped within the closed vein), hyperpigmentation of the skin (darkening of the skin), allergic reaction (rash, hives, or anaphylaxis) or infection.
- Injection of the foam bubbles can be irritating to the body and cause symptoms including chest pain and headache. We minimize this risk by giving you only a small amount of foam medication per day and by elevating your legs for 10-15 minutes after treatment.
- Some patients develop "trapped blood" within larger varicose veins days to weeks after treatment. This usually presents as a tender, possibly red, firm area. It can generally be managed with ice packs and anti-inflammatory medication but we may offer needle drainage of the blood to alleviate pain and minimize the risk of hyperpigmentation.
- Some patients develop new, tiny spider veins near areas of treated veins, which is also called "telangiectatic matting". This usually occurs 2-4 weeks after treatment and fades within 4-6 months but can take up to a year. It is more common in women who take estrogen supplements.

- There is a small risk of clot formation within the deep veins of the legs. This risk is minimized by using ultrasound guidance throughout treatment to monitor the foam and to avoid injections near areas where the deep and superficial veins are connected through "perforating veins". We will ask you to do flex your foot during injections and to do calf exercises afterward to circulate the medication away from the deep veins. Walking after treatment is also crucial to avoid pooling of blood in the deep veins, which can predispose to blood clots.

Follow-up Ultrasounds and Clinic appointment

We will schedule an ultrasound 2-7 days after your final treatment to make sure the veins are responding appropriately. We will do the formal ultrasound of your superficial veins for backwards flow (or "reflux") at one month. At that point, we will re-evaluate your symptoms and anatomy and decide if additional treatment is indicated. Be sure to come to all of your scheduled follow-up appointments to ensure that your veins are healing properly. It is important to come to all follow-up appointments so your provider may follow your progress and address any adverse effects promptly.

When to call the doctor (858) 550-0330

- If you have questions or concerns about compression stockings or your before/after care instructions.
- If you have large, firm, painful/throbbing areas and/or redness over the treated vein(s). In that case, the doctor may offer needle drainage of the "trapped blood".
- If you have worsening swelling in your leg after treatment.
- If walking makes your legs hurt more and does not relieve pain.
- Red and warm skin along the treated vein.
- If you develop a rash or fever.

When to Seek Emergency Care

The following symptoms may indicate a serious medical concern. If you experience any of the following **after hours**, please seek emergency care.

- Sudden severe pain in your leg that worsens as you walk.
- Sudden and severe swelling in your treated leg.
- Fever, chills, and night sweats
- **If you have any shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or chest pain call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room.**