

Thread Veins, Spider Veins, Reticular Veins (TSR Veins) – Microsclerotherapy Information Sheet

What are thread veins, spider veins and reticular veins (TSR veins)?

These are small veins that are in the upper layer of the skin, causing prominent red, blue or purple lines, similar to a river delta. The medical term is 'Telangiectasia'. This is a very common problem that mostly affects women; however men can also develop them. The legs are most often affected; however they can affect any area of the body including the face.

What is the issue with TSR veins?

Usually TSR veins do not cause symptoms but their appearance can cause cosmetic upset. Sometimes they can be uncomfortable, producing a sensation of heat or itching. TSR veins and varicose veins (prominent tortuous superficial veins larger than 5mm diameter) are common and therefore both types of veins are frequently present in the same patient.

What causes TSR veins?

The main causes of TSR veins are hormonal changes, local injury and sun damage. The onset of these veins can occur from the teenage years; however the veins increase in number and prominence as you age. If your mother or father suffered from TSR veins you are more likely to develop them.

Can you prevent TSR veins developing or extending?

If you have not developed TSR veins, you can help prevent them by maintaining a healthy body mass index and consider using simple support hosiery. Avoid standing for prolonged periods and do not smoke tobacco. These measures can help limit the progress or extension of TSR veins. There is no strong medical evidence to support the benefit of commercial oral medication, nor creams or lotions.

What can be done about TSR veins?

Injection treatment of the veins is called 'microsclerotherapy'. This treatment is carried out with a very fine needle, that injects a gentle detergent solution, known as sclerosant into the TRS veins. This empties the TRS veins, causes the lining cells of the TRS vein to dissolve and seals the vein. The vein is slowly absorbed by the body over two to three months. The procedure is carried out in the consulting room, it can be associated with a slight stinging sensation. After injections are completed, compression is applied, usually using a stocking, or less often a bandage.

Are there any risks?

The vast majority of patients do not experience complications. Brown staining or pigmentation may occur in up to a third of patients to a varying degree. Pigmentation usually resolves completely within 6 – 12 months, however in 1 – 2% of patients this can take up to 18 months.

The risk of a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is extremely low from microsclerotherapy (0.1% or less). Rarely a small scab may develop at an injection site, this will separate and leave a pale scar – similar to a scab forming after a graze. Do not pick or lift a scab as this can result in more obvious scarring. Allergy to STS (sodium tetradecyl sulphate – 'Fibrovein') is rare.

A deep brown / black mark can remain at the injection site of larger reticular veins; it may resemble a dark freckle – this is due to a small amount of trapped blood and this can often be released at your follow up visit. 'Matting' is a rare complication that affects areas treated for TSR veins – new exceptionally fine veins develop

and result in a red discolouration of the skin. Matting usually resolves within 12 months, however it can be permanent. If matting or dark freckle like marks do not resolve, they can be treated by laser if desired.

Do I need to do anything before I attend for microsclerotherapy?

Avoid moisturisers, skin creams, bath oils in the 24 hours before your appointment for treatment. **BRING YOUR COMPRESSION STOCKING WITH YOU TO THE APPOINTMENT.** It is sensible to wear loose fitting clothing e.g. joggers, leisure or track suit.

What happens after the treatment?

The compression should remain in place for 3 days continuously. After three days the compression can be removed to take a short warm shower or bath and must be replaced immediately and this continues for the first week.

After the first week, the stockings should be worn daily and removed overnight.

DO NOT take a hot shower/bath or use a sauna or steam room, as this will cause the veins to dilate and result in the procedure failing and higher risk of brown skin staining known as pigmentation.

What to expect when I remove the stocking/compression?

The areas injected will look worse than pre-treatment for several weeks. There may be areas of bruising and inflammation. The body reacts to the inflammation and it takes between four and eight weeks for this to settle. There may be some red/brown staining that can take several months to fade. Protect any areas affected with SPF 50 suncream to prevent them darkening. Rarely this can be permanent. You may notice small scabs or a raised painful lump if slightly larger veins are also treated. If uncomfortable over the counter anti-inflammatory gels or creams can be applied to ease any symptoms (Ibuprofen e.g. Ibuprofen Gel).

Is there anything else I need to do to ensure the best outcome from the treatment?

Gentle daily exercise, at least 20 to 30 minutes walking, gentle jogging, cycling. When sitting, put your legs up – aim to have your toes level with your shoulders – like the position when sitting in a reclining chair. Do not wax or shave your legs for a minimum of three weeks (you should be wearing your compression stockings for this time).

Some patients find Arnica Cream of benefit. This is a homeopathic remedy, used to reduce the duration and extent of bruising.

Do not pick at any scabs

Do not sunbathe, use sunbeds or other tanning aids, or use sauna/steam rooms *for a minimum of 4 weeks.*

How many treatments will I need?

The number of treatments varies depending on the number and size of the veins. Even a single area will usually require a course of two treatments, to obtain a good outcome. *There is a limit to the amount of sclerosant that can be injected in a session.*

Is it successful?

The majority of patients see a significant improvement and for some all TRS veins disappearing. Each patient is different and the response to treatment varies. You will have been shown how well your own veins empty and the potential outcome during your consultation.

Even when veins have disappeared, new veins can form in other areas and at the previously treated site. This is especially common in response to injuries.

It takes between 2 and 6 months for the full benefit of treatment to be appreciated.