

SURGICOM PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET



VARICOSE VEINS

GENERAL INFORMATION

There are 2 main systems of veins which drain blood from the leg. These are the saphenous veins which lie under the skin and the deep veins inside the middle of the leg.

The saphenous veins have valves that permit blood to go in only one direction - upwards towards the heart. If these valves break down the blood in the saphenous vein cannot move along and upward well enough, so the veins bulge and look twisted. These are called varicose veins. The deep veins in the leg do not need valves as they are surrounded and squeezed by the leg muscles so the blood in them has to move along. The two systems connect with each other.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- When the blood in the varicose veins does not move along well enough, waste products are not carried away from the legs. Over a period of time this can cause a number of problems.
- Aching heaviness and cramping of the legs which are made worse by standing for long periods of time.
- Skin rash and poor wound healing.
- Sometimes an ulcer will form just above the inner part of the ankle.
- Many persons are bothered by their unsightly appearance.

DIAGNOSIS

- The diagnosis is made by doing a physical examination.
- Sometimes your doctor may require a doppler ultrasound to be done to give more information.

TREATMENT

- Non-surgical treatment may sometimes be advisable.
- Your doctor has advised you to have your varicose veins operated upon. This is usually the most effective treatment for removing veins.

2.

PRE-OPERATIVE PREPARATION

- Do not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before the operation.
- Your doctor will advise you when you need to be admitted.
- Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you take, especially medicines which may affect blood clotting.

OPERATION

- You will require a general anaesthetic for the operation.
- An incision will be made in your groin to tie off the top end of the vein. Multiple small incisions over the veins are usually required.
- The operation usually takes between 1 - 3 hours.

POST OPERATIVE CARE

- You will be taken to a recovery room and observed. When you are awake and stable you will be returned to your hospital bed.
- Your doctor will advise you about getting up and walking around.
- Your doctor will arrange with you what bandages or elastic stockings you need to wear for a period after the operation.

COMPLICATIONS

1. Complications are not common after a varicose vein operation but you must be aware of the following possible complications.
2. A bleed from one of the operating sites is possible which may require active intervention.
3. Extensive bruising of the leg is not unusual after the operation and is not really a complication.
4. Infections in the wounds are possible but rare.
5. The result of the operation is not always 100%. Some varicose veins may remain after the surgery.
6. A significant proportion of patients have varicose veins recurring in the years after this operation.
7. Systemic complications like deep venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism are rare but possible after any operation or anaesthetic.

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