

## Foam treatment

Foam treatment is safe, effective and trouble free when combined with laser. You may however experience some lumpiness, pain ('phlebitis') and possible brown staining as the vein shrivels up and disappears. This can take several months to go, but the overall experience is that the leg just gets better and better over time.

Rare complications following foam treatment include fleeting visual disturbances, DVT and there has been one (out of tens of thousands of treatments) minor stroke.



## If you are worried

If you are concerned about anything that does not seem to be going according to plan please telephone us on 01392 36 35 34 and we can discuss the problem with you.



**The South West's premier independent  
healthcare and cosmetic clinic**

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Information for patients  
**Endovenous Laser Ablation (EVLA)**



## Getting ready for EVLA

It's a good idea to refrain from shaving your leg for a few days before the operation; you can be a little itchy under your dressings.

Wear loose fitting clothes such as tracksuit bottoms and trainers for comfort.



Please make sure you have someone to give you a lift for your treatment, to pick you up afterwards and to be with you overnight, just in case you feel faint or trip and hurt yourself.

If you are having sedation you should avoid food or milky drinks for 6 hours prior to the operation. You can drink clear fluids up to 2 hours beforehand.

Before surgery your veins will be marked carefully. We will check with you, your records and your scan results and you will sign a consent form. All the normal safety checks are done, just as if you were having a bigger operation.

We see all our patients at the beginning of each session to plan the list. After that we can give you a more accurate idea of your operation time, so that you can arrange your lift home.

## The procedure itself

You will have a small drip placed in the back of your hand to give you your sedation. If you decide to have the EVLA without any sedation we may still do this for safety.

The varicose vein is located once again using ultrasound and a small injection of local anaesthetic is given. A guide-wire is used to introduce a soft plastic sheath through which the laser fibre is passed.

The laser is placed in exactly the right spot within the vein, guided by the scanner. The vein is then surrounded by a mixture of cool

saline and local anaesthetic using several small injections. The laser is then activated, withdrawn slowly and the vein is vapourised by the 'radial fire' beam.

Although you might feel some mild discomfort during the process, most people do not feel anything once the local anaesthetic has worked. Please feel free to chat to the team during your treatment!

Tortuous varicose veins lower down in the leg are treated in one of three ways. Small veins often disappear with the EVLA alone. Medium veins can be treated with foam injections at the same sitting. Larger veins are best removed via small incisions using a crotchet hook type instrument. We can use the best combination for you and if any remaining veins are present at your post op check-up we will discuss your best options.

## After the procedure

If you have had sedation you will 'come around' in the recovery area and then enjoy a drink! You will have paper strip dressings lower down the leg, a full length crepe type bandage and on top of that, a 'Class II' stocking which may feel pretty tight!

Good compression is important to prevent bruising and to increase the chances of a good result. Most surgeons recommend four nights/five days, but if your stockings are very irritating 48 hours is fine.

### Walking

'Five miles a day' is no longer the recommended advice, but it would certainly help your health! The key is to keep moving regularly to decrease the risk of blood clots (DVT) and to reduce bruising. If you are sitting, use a foot-stool and get up for a stretch every 30-40 minutes. Running can be painful for a week or two, but low impact exercise such as speed walking or a cross-trainer is fine.

### Driving

You should avoid driving, operating machinery or making important decisions for 24h after sedation. Your leg will feel like it is in a wet suit; most people feel safe to drive after a few days, but practice on a quiet road first.

### Water

Please keep the leg dry until the stocking and bandage comes off. You will achieve a better cosmetic result if you avoid soaking the paper strips for about 10 days. Careful bathing or the use of a 'limbo' waterproof cover works well. There is no evidence that swimming in the sea or a pool can do any harm to your wounds after the strips are soaked off. Do use sunscreen until the wounds are pale and almost invisible.

### Work and social life

As long as your leg feels comfortable there are no restrictions on what you can do. Just be sensible and look forward to a 'normal' leg!

### Flying after treatment

For short haul (under two hours) two weeks should be safe, but for long haul and to be cautious, 4-6 weeks is recommended.

## Possible complications

The vast majority of people enjoy a good result following EVLA, but here are some of the problems that can sometimes happen.

### Pain and bruising

Most patients score their maximum pain at about 2-3 on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is no pain at all and 10 the worst. Bruising can be very painful for some people however. Ibuprofen and paracetamol in combination are usually more than enough.

Amica (herbal, not homeopathic) has been used effectively to treat bruising. It's normal to feel good for a few days before the feeling of bruising sets in.



### Deep Vein Thrombosis

In Exeter we have never had a case of DVT following EVLA. From the scientific literature the risk is less than that reported following surgery. If you have a particular family risk of DVT we will give you an injection of heparin (an anticoagulant drug) to cover your treatment.

### Nerve damage/numb areas

If you have a very slim or a large leg there is an increased risk that pressure from the bandages and stocking could compress nerves and cause temporary numbness. We sometimes advise that you purchase a carefully tailored compression stocking to suit your shape if this is the case.

In patients having phlebectomies (gentle hooking out of the veins) it's possible that some of the sensory nerves can be damaged or bruised. About 1:10 people suffer numb patches as a result. These recover over a period of months. More serious nerve damage, leading to muscle weakness, has been reported but it is very rare.

### Failure of treatment and long-term success

As we grow in experience primary failure to obliterate the vein has become a rarity. We always err on the side of safety however, particularly in those with small veins or slim legs, but if the vein has not disappeared at your six week follow-up scan we can either laser it at a higher power or consider foam treatment or surgery. Five-year recurrence rates for laser are about 5% which is better than surgery.

