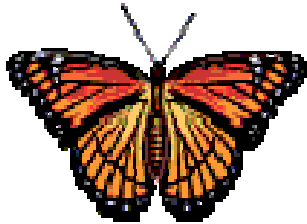


# Monarch Laser & Wellness Centre

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## Sclerotherapy Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is sclerotherapy?**

Sclerotherapy is a non-surgical office procedure that can treat most diseased surface veins. Medication is injected into the vein using an extremely tiny needle. The medication closes down the vein walls so that they stick together. Blood is rerouted through other veins. The “sclerosed” veins are gradually reabsorbed by the body. Getting rid of diseased veins actually improves the circulation and makes legs healthier.

### **What causes vein problems?**

Veins carry used blood to the heart through one-way valve systems. When there is a weakness in the vein wall or a faulty valve, the valve stretches and no longer closes properly. The veins become filled with blood that can't empty properly, causing pain, swelling, discolorations, sores that won't heal, blood clots and other problems.

### **What types of vein problems do we treat?**

Varicose, reticular and spider veins.

### **How many treatments are required?**

Depending on the type and severity of the varicose veins, the average number of treatments is anywhere between 2 and 5. The larger vessels only require a few (3 or 4) well placed injections with a stronger solution. They must be treated first. The smaller veins may require many points of injection with a weaker solution or may be treated with the laser. The injections will be stopped at any time the patient so requests.

### **Does the treatment hurt?**

Most patients experience minimal discomfort similar to an allergy or tetanus shot with each injection. Discomfort after treatment is rare. Most patients can return to work after treatments.

### **What are the most common side effects?**

All medical treatments entail a certain degree of risk.

The majority of people who have sclerotherapy performed see good improvement. Approximately 10% of those who undergo sclerotherapy have poor to fair results. In very rare cases, the patient's condition will become worse after treatment.

### **For spider veins and reticular veins:**

In the first few days itching, bruising, aching, redness and swelling are common.

Most of these symptoms resolve spontaneously. You may take Tylenol (acetaminophen), but do not take ASA or related compounds (aspirin or ibuprofen) since they may increase bleeding. It may help to elevate the legs and rotate the ankles.

Sometimes (particularly those with fair skin) notice small red circles or brown lines after treatments. These are due to the pigment of the blood or inflammation and usually resolve within 1 month. Most (90%) of the discoloration resolves within 1 year (laser treatment can help to eliminate this side effect).

A small blood clot may develop at the injection site and causes a lump. This will disappear in 2-8 weeks. A small subcutaneous ulcer of the skin overlying the injected vessel may occasionally occur. If this should happen it will leave a small scar.

“Matting” refers to the development of new tiny blood vessels in the treated vessel area. This temporary phenomenon occurs 2 to 4 weeks after treatment and resolves within 4 to 6 months. It occurs in up to 18% of women receiving estrogen therapy (for menopause) and 2 to 4% of all patients. (This condition can be treated with the laser should it occur.)

Allergic reactions can very rarely occur, which includes hives (itchy skin), shortness of breath, and swelling around the airway. If this occurs at home, seek medical attention immediately.

### **For varicose veins:**

In addition to the side effects listed above there are several complications unique to varicose vein injections.

Phlebitis may develop at the site of injection as a firm nodule. This resolves with elevation, application of a cool pack, rotation of the ankles, tensor bandage and aspirin 48 hours after treatment.

Blood clots are a very rare complication, seen in approximately 1 out of every 30,000 patients treated for varicose veins larger than 3 to 4mm in diameter. Blood clots or deep venous thrombosis (DVT) will be recognized by pain and swelling of the entire foot. The possible danger of blood clots includes dislodging into the lungs (sudden chest pain/ shortness of breath/ death) or causing post phlebitis syndrome, in which the blood clot is not cleared from the legs, resulting in a permanent swelling of the legs.

If sclerotherapy solution is injected into an artery instead of a vein, it cause result in interruption of the blood supply to the area that the artery supplies.

### **What should I do before a treatment?**

Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen or other arthritis medicine for 2 days before and after your treatment because these medications can increase bruising. Do not drink alcoholic beverages or smoke for 2 days before and after your treatment.

Shower and wash your legs thoroughly with an antibacterial soap. Do not shave your legs the day of your appointment. Do not apply any cream or lotion to your legs, including tanning cream. Bring loose shorts to wear during the treatment.

Eat a light snack 1-1 1/2 hours before your appointment. If you get lightheaded during medical procedures, consider bringing someone to drive you home.

### **What should I do after a treatment?**

#### **For spider veins:**

Your legs will be covered in cotton balls attached with tape, so you are advised to wear dark coloured loose fitting clothing to the session. Remove the cotton balls after one hour. Resume normal activities. Avoid alcohol and hot baths for 48 hours.

**For reticular and varicose veins:**

If the veins are large, you may be asked to wear your compression stocking for 48 hours. Keep active for a half hour after the session to maximize results. Bring comfortable walking shoes. If traveling 30 minutes to the office, have someone drive you so that you can move your feet and legs as the passenger. Avoid tanning until the end treatment and all the bruises have disappeared, otherwise your tan colour may be irregular. Do not use self tanning lotions for a least one month (it causes unsightly streaking). Maintain normal activities but avoid strenuous physical activities such as high impact aerobics or weight lifting for the first 48 hours. Avoid prolonged standing and hot baths for 1 week. Cool you legs with cold water after each shower. Most people can return immediately after a treatment.

**Are there people who should not have sclerotherapy treatments?**

Pregnant or nursing women, those with allergies to the sclerosing agents or to needles (containing nickel) or those with peripheral vascular disease or severe diabetics.

**How much do treatments cost?**

The cost depends on the number of injections needed. Number of treatments varies depending on severity of vein disease. For some patients treatments are covered by OHIP.

**Reticular and Varicose Veins:**

\$10/injection (average number needed about 12 per session)

Number of injections varies depending on severity of vein disease.

**Spider Vein Removal:**

\$125 per ½ hour treatment

**What can I do to prevent varicose veins from coming back after a treatment?**

Varicose veins are a chronic illness and are subject to recurrence, but there are some steps that you can take to reduce this.

1. Compression stockings are highly recommended and come in a variety of colours and styles. Use them when your legs ache, for long trips or for prolonged walking or standing.
2. Wear comfortable shoes with a 1-2 inch heel (running shoes are best)
3. Avoid wearing girdles and ordinary knee high stockings
4. Exercise regularly. Avoid standing for long periods and if you do, flex your muscles or sit/lie down with your legs elevated.