

Patient information

Varicose Vein (Radiofrequency Ablation RFA)

Interventional Radiology

This document is designed to provide you with detailed information about this procedure. Please take the time to read through this leaflet carefully to gain a better understanding of what the procedure entails, its benefits, risks, and what to expect during and afterward. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor but can act as a starting point for such discussions. If you have any questions about the procedure, please ask the doctor who has referred you, or the doctor performing the procedure.

What is a Varicose Vein procedure?

Varicose Veins are widened veins which look swollen and twisted under the skin. They're most common on your legs but can appear on other parts of the body. They can cause pain and skin changes.

There can be several reasons for the Varicose Veins to form.

- Age
- Gender
- Family History
- Heavy Lifting
- Obesity
- Multiple Pregnancies
- Prolonged Standing.

This procedure aims to reduce the symptoms that can come from Varicose Veins and may also help to reduce their visibility.

What are the benefits of Varicose Vein procedure?

Symptoms of pain and aching will usually be alleviated after two days and a noticeable improvement to the Varicose Veins is usually in one – two weeks.

What will happen if I decide not to have treatment?

There are some other treatments that might be possible (please see alternative treatment section). If you choose not to proceed you should discuss this carefully with the doctor that recommended this treatment.

Who will be doing the procedure?

A specially trained team of doctors, nurses and radiographers in the X-ray department. The specially trained doctor is called an Interventional Radiologist. They have skills in using different imaging such as X-ray, Ultrasound and CT scanners to carry out procedures.

Before the procedure

The Interventional Radiology nursing team will contact you before your procedure with any information you need to know to get ready for it. This may include stopping medications, other tests, or stopping eating or drinking for some time before the procedure. If you are an inpatient on the ward, they will contact the ward nurse.

If you have any allergies, you must let the nurse/doctor know. If you have been unwell after receiving X-ray dye (used for CT scans) please let the team know.

On the day of the procedure the Interventional Radiologist will go through a consent form with you. You can ask any questions you may have then or call the department before your test on 0151 706 2748 Royal Liverpool hospital, or 0151 529 2925 Aintree hospital.

Please contact us if you are unclear on any of these instructions.

Pre procedure you will be contacted to attend the Interventional Radiology department to have a blood test completed and to be measured and supplied with a pair of thigh length compression stockings.

How is the procedure carried out?

Will I be given an anaesthetic?

Yes, the doctor will numb the skin with some local anaesthetic throughout the procedure.

Where will the procedure take place?

Ultrasound room or X-ray operating theatre in Interventional Radiology.

How is it done?

You will be required to change into a hospital gown. You may need to remove your jewellery, glasses, contact lenses or false teeth – check with the nurse. You will then be escorted to the theatre, where you will be looked after by the team.

Once the consent is completed you will be positioned on a trolley and the Doctor will perform an ultrasound to assess the vessel. After this has been completed the Doctor and Nurse will begin to set up the equipment required for the procedure and then we will perform a safety checklist to ensure the safety of the patient and confirm we have everything we need to proceed (this is known as a WHO checklist).

Position – You will lie on your back on the X-ray bed.

Access – The Dr will get access via the Varicose Vein.

The Radiologist will use imaging to see the area to be treated. This may involve X-ray, Ultrasound or a CT scan. The skin will be cleaned and covered with a sterile drape ready to start the procedure.

The local anaesthetic will be used to freeze the area and then the doctor will perform the procedure.

The procedure is performed using Ultrasound and Radiofrequency waves. The Doctor will insert a small sheath (plastic tube) into the varicose vein and then use a catheter (small plastic tube) to gain access. The catheter (small plastic tube) once placed will be used to deliver the heat to the vessel wall. This will cause it to shrink and seal the vein. This will be done right down the affected vein. Once the vein has been closed blood will reroute itself into other healthy veins.

After the procedure has been completed the region will be cleaned, and a small dressing will be applied where the puncture to the skin has been made. In addition, wool and crepe will be used for compression to help with the leg healing and reduce the chances of Varicose veins returning.

How long will it take

The procedure time may differ from patient to patient depending on individual patient anatomy. Approximately the procedure usually takes one hour.

After the procedure

Recovery - Nursing staff will check your blood pressure, pulse, and procedure site in the recovery area. The length of time this is done for depends on each patient/procedure. Usually around 30 minutes.

Discharge - The Doctor will advise you to walk around for the first 15 minutes and then 15 minutes of sitting in the Interventional Radiology recovery area where a post set of observations will be completed. If there are no concerns, then you will be discharged home if you are an outpatient. You will usually need an escort home from hospital and a responsible adult to stay with you overnight. This can be discussed with nurse when they ring you.

If you are a ward patient, you will be returned to the ward for further observation by the ward staff.

Back to work/driving/normal activities We would usually recommend not to drive for 24 hours post procedure. This can be discussed with nurse when they ring you.

What are the risks of Varicose Vein procedure?

Varicose Vein treatment via RFA (radiofrequency ablation) are safe procedures but there are always some risks;

Bruising around the treated vessel. (1 in 10)

Bleeding into the support stocking.

Phlebitis- Blood clot in the superficial vein, this may delay your return to normal activities. (Between 1 in 10 and 1 in 100).

Skin burns and nerve can occur very infrequently (1 in 1000). These may take a long time to heal, and nerve injury may extremely rarely be permanent leading to a patch of skin with no sensation or weakness of the leg.

Deep vein thrombosis (clot in the deep veins in the calf and thigh) is rare and pulmonary embolism (clot travelling to the lungs) is extremely rare, but both of these events may require further treatment.

Other:

- Allergic reaction.

Are there any alternative treatments available?

- Conventional Varicose Vein Surgery.
- Sclerotherapy.
- Medical support stockings from GP.
- Laser Ablation.

It is always up to you whether you choose to proceed with a particular treatment. Some of these treatment options may not be available for you. You should speak to your doctor about this.

Further Appointments

Follow-up: If any further appointments are needed, you will be contacted by the team that sent you for the procedure.

Unexpected problems or concerns: Ring the Interventional Radiology department if related to this procedure.

Royal Liverpool University Hospital - 0151 706 2748

Aintree University Hospital – 0151 529 2925

If you think you need **urgent** medical assistance please contact NHS111 or attend your local A&E Department.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

**Interventional Radiology
Imaging Department
Royal – 0151 706 2748**

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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