

## V03lite Varicose Veins Surgery

This document will give you information about varicose veins surgery. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

### What are varicose veins?

Varicose veins are enlarged and twisted veins in the leg. They tend to run in families and are made worse by pregnancy and in people whose job involves a lot of standing.

Veins in the legs contain many one-way valves to help the upward flow of blood back to the heart.

If the valves fail to work properly, blood can flow in the wrong direction, causing varicose veins (see figure 1).

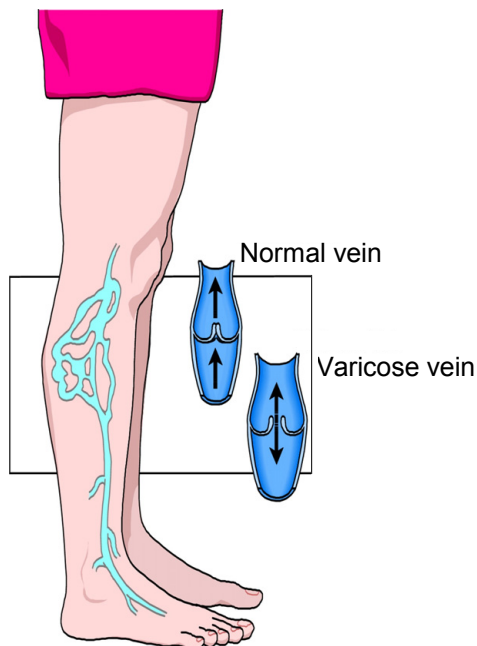


Figure 1

The cause of varicose veins

When the veins enlarge, the valves fail and blood flows backward

### What are the benefits of surgery?

You should no longer have varicose veins, and your symptoms should improve. Surgery should help prevent the symptoms and complications that varicose veins cause.

### Are there any alternatives to surgery?

There are other treatments such as injections (foam sclerotherapy), radiofrequency ablation (RFA) or endovenous laser ablation (EVLA).

Support stockings can often prevent the veins from getting worse and ease aching.

### What does the operation involve?

Varicose veins surgery is usually performed under a general anaesthetic. The operation usually takes between twenty minutes and two and a half hours.

Your surgeon may disconnect the superficial veins from the deep veins in your legs through a cut in your groin or the back of your knee. They will probably make many small cuts along the length of the varicose veins and remove them.

Often the main varicose vein is 'stripped out' using a special instrument.

### What complications can happen?

#### 1 General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection in a surgical wound
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots

## 2 Specific complications of this operation

- Developing a lump under a wound
- Numbness or tingling
- Damage to nerves
- Continued varicose veins
- Swelling of the leg
- Major injury to the main arteries, veins or nerves of the leg

### How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

You may need to wear support stockings. You should be able to return to work after one to two weeks but this may vary depending on your type of work.

As long as your wounds have healed, you should be able to carry out normal activities by four weeks.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Occasionally varicose veins come back.

### Summary

Varicose veins are a common problem and can lead to complications if left untreated. Support stockings can help to control symptoms but will not remove the varicose veins.

### Further information

- NHS smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169 and at [www.gosmokefree.co.uk](http://www.gosmokefree.co.uk)
- [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk) – for advice on maintaining a healthy weight
- [www.eidoactive.co.uk](http://www.eidoactive.co.uk) – for information on how exercise can help you
- [www.aboutmyhealth.org](http://www.aboutmyhealth.org) – for support and information you can trust
- Vascular Society of Great Britain and Ireland at [www.vascularsociety.org.uk](http://www.vascularsociety.org.uk)
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 – textphone)

## Acknowledgements

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