

Varicose Vein Surgery

The Procedure

Before the operation the consultant will examine your legs again and make some pen marks on the skin over the veins. You will also meet with your anaesthetist, who will ask about your general health and discuss the anaesthetic and immediate post-operative care.

Under anaesthetic, a small incision is made in the groin or behind the knee and the main connection of the varicose veins to the deep veins is tied off. Other lumpy varicose veins are removed using small incisions, which are closed with a paper strip. While you are asleep, local anaesthetic is injected into the groin or knee incisions to keep you comfortable when you wake up. After the operation, your leg is bandaged and then you will be transferred to the anaesthetic recovery area.

When you are fully awake and comfortable, you will be transferred back to the ward, and given a warm drink prior to getting out of bed when you are ready for discharge.

You will be given some tablets to take home which you may take as instructed, if you feel some discomfort.

Care after Discharge

The day after surgery, the bandage should be removed and replaced with the support stocking provided. This can be done yourself or by the nurses at the hospital or your GP surgery if you would prefer. Leave the groin or knee dressing and any paper strips in place. The stocking should be worn day and night for the first week, and then during the day only for the second week. You should not get the leg wet for 48 hours following surgery, but after that the stocking can be removed for showering. The paper strips normally fall off by themselves, but they can be removed after 5 days if they are still there.

Progress and Activity after Discharge

You are encouraged to take two 15 minute walks every day for the two weeks following surgery. When you are not walking, you should try and keep your leg up as much as possible to stop the leg swelling. This is particularly important in the first week.

Some bruising is usual following surgery but generally patients are able to return to normal activity after 1 - 2 weeks. You can drive when your legs feel safe to do so (normally after a few days), but you should not fly for 6 weeks following varicose vein surgery.

You will be reviewed in the outpatient clinic by your consultant 6 - 10 weeks following surgery.

Complications following varicose vein surgery

Day case varicose vein surgery is usually extremely well tolerated and significant complications are rare. Most patients recover quickly and return to normal activities.

You may feel rather tired for a couple of days and it is usual for there to be some bruising and minor discomfort around the wounds. You take adequate painkillers as instructed to keep you comfortable. The small incisions will heal to small white marks on the leg which will hardly be noticeable. Very occasionally minor infection can develop in the groin wound which may require antibiotics.

The risk of deep venous thrombosis (DVT) following varicose vein surgery is extremely low at less than 1%.