



## Fact Sheet

### **Thread Veins: Laser Therapy**

Thread veins or telangiectasias are tiny superficial red, blue or purplish blood vessels, which are all too visible to the naked eye. Thread veins vary in diameter from very tiny red marks with a diameter of ½ mm or less, to larger blue/purple thread veins with a diameter of up to 3mm. However, left untreated many of the smaller red blood vessels eventually enlarge, developing into the larger blue/purple unsightly type of vessel.

The colour of an individual thread veins depends on how much oxygen the red cells in the vessel are carrying. In the smallest vessels the oxygen content is high so these tiny vessels appear red in colour, whereas in larger thread veins the amount of oxygen carried in the blood is less, so these vessels appear blue, or even purple in colour.

Leg thread veins can be treated by sclerotherapy or laser therapy. The treatment most appropriate for your particular problem will be discussed at the initial consultation.

#### **Treatment**

Most patients with this condition have a mixture of smaller red and larger blue/purple vessels. Hitherto the only solution to this problem was sclerotherapy of the larger vessels, which involves injections, and Pulsed Dye laser treatment subsequently for the smaller blood vessels. The new Long Pulsed Lyra Nd:YAG laser, however, has revolutionised treatment for patients with thread veins who do not want sclerotherapy or the bruising from the Pulsed Dye laser.

It is important that treatment is carried out when the skin is “pale and interesting”. Melanin pigment, the pigment formed when the skin goes brown after sunbathing, can absorb significant laser energy and make the beneficial effect of the laser on the unwanted blood vessels less marked. In addition, there is more chance of producing whitening of the skin if treatment is undertaken when a patient is sun-tanned.

#### **Possible Complications**

It is quite common for patients to develop a transient reactive increase in pigment at the treatment site. This is more likely in people who tan easily and less likely in people who burn or never tan when exposed to the sunshine. This reaction may be seen in up to 20% of patients who pigment readily in the sun, but will disappear in three or four months. The chances of developing increased pigmentation, increase as the treatment extends further down the leg. Increased pigmentation is much more likely after treatment, for instance on the lower leg than on the upper leg.

More rarely, after laser ablation of a blood vessel a pigment called haemosiderin may be released. This is a brown iron, derived from the red pigment haemoglobin, contained in red blood cells. Again, this change is more likely to occur on the lower leg than the upper leg and may take longer to clear than the increased pigmentation associated with melanin deposition. Haemosiderin is more likely to occur in individuals with high body iron stores. It is important therefore, to discontinue vitamin supplements which contain iron or iron tablets during the

course of laser treatment. Obviously if iron is prescribed by your doctor because your body iron stores are low or because you are anaemic, it is important to continue with this treatment.

However, the doctor carrying out your treatment should be informed about all the tablets you may be taking.

Scarring is very unlikely with either the Pulsed Dye or with the Long Pulsed Lyra Nd: YAG laser. However, there is a small but distinct risk of scarring following treatment of thread veins around the ankle.

The doctor treating you will always carry out a test area first and will take special care around your ankle, reducing the energy fluence to try and minimise any chance of scarring developing.

### **After Treatment**

Immediately after treatment the treated area will appear reddened and may be slightly swollen. The tiny red thread veins will also appear reddened and may be slightly swollen. Following treatment with the Pulsed Dye laser, the tiny red thread veins may take on a bruised look and this takes on average 7 -14 days to fade. Support stockings are not necessary after the small red veins are treated, but if the large blue/purple thread veins are treated with the Lyra system, support stockings are necessary to maximise the chances of success. It is also important to minimise athletic or gymnastic activity for a week after treatment.

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For any further information please call us on our Freephone number – 0800 028 7222