

Varicose Veins

Post Operative Care

Prof Denis Harkin

A guide to help you recover from your Varicose Vein procedure, including general advice based on commonly asked questions.

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What to expect / things to note after your procedure

After a general anaesthetic / sedation

- You should have someone to accompany you home and remain with you for at least the first 24 hours
- You must not consume alcohol for 24 hours
- You should not make any vital decisions or sign any legal documents for 24 hours
- You should not take any medication not prescribed or acknowledged by your doctor

Dressings and compression stockings

You will be discharged with your dressing in place. This should be left in place 24 hours post-surgery. You will be given a pair of class 2 compression stockings to apply after you remove the bandage. These are usually thigh length stockings. You may need some assistance the first couple of days to apply these. Give them a good stretch before putting them on. Avoid rolling these down.

After 24 hours wearing the stockings, you can remove them to have a shower. After your shower you must reapply your stockings. You should wear the stockings day and night for the first two weeks and then only during the day for a further 4 weeks.

Wound care and bleeding

If any bleeding occurs through the dressing or the stocking, apply a wound pad to the area and secure with a bandage and elevate your leg for 30 minutes. This should stop most bleeding. If not, please contact us on the numbers below.

The small steri-strips at the insertion site can be removed in 7 - 10 days. They may fall off themselves before this. Waterproof dressings can be removed after 3 - 5 days. There will be some bruising or redness in the areas where the vein was removed. This will resolve. There will be a small scar there that will fade within 3 - 12 months. Cover this area with sunscreen during sunny weather to avoid burning in the area which may make the scar more evident.

You may experience a tightening or pulling sensation in the thigh region following your procedure. You may also feel a firm cord like area along the vein that was treated. This may feel worse after 3 - 5 days than it did initially after the procedure. This is normal and should subside after 7 - 10 days.

Veins below the area that were treated may begin to decrease in size within a week or two. Sometimes larger veins below and branch veins may persist. They will be evaluated and discussed at your follow up appointment 4 - 6 weeks after your procedure.

Activity

For the rest of the day of surgery, you will need to keep your leg elevated and take 1 or 2 short walks. On the day after your procedure please start to increase your mobility. Continue your daily activities as much as possible and walk as much as you like with periods of rest and leg elevation interspersed into your normal routine for 1 week. Avoid running, jogging or high impact aerobics for 2 weeks. Avoid swimming until your wounds are healed.

Driving

In general, driving is possible 48 hours after an uncomplicated day case.

Before you drive you should be:

- free from the sedative effects of any painkillers
- able to sit in the car comfortably and work the controls
- able to make an emergency stop

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Flying

As flying can increase your risk of developing a blood clot, you should avoid taking a flight for 4 - 6 weeks after your varicose vein surgery. If you need to fly sooner, please discuss this with us.

Pain and discomfort

You may experience some pain or discomfort following your procedure. This can be treated by taking over-the-counter medications such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Please follow the instructions on the medication box. If your pain is not controlled by these, please contact us as we may need to see you.

Reduce the risk of clots

You can reduce the risk of clots forming in the veins in your legs and pelvis (deep vein thrombosis) by staying hydrated, being mobile, doing foot and leg exercises when you are resting and by wearing compression stockings as directed. In some cases, an oral or injection of blood thinning medication may be prescribed.

Avoid smoking post-surgery as this may increase your risk of a blood clot along with slowing down the healing process.

Please ask your consultant for advice if you are taking an oral contraceptive pill or HRT as you may be required to hold this before and after your surgery or may need a prescription for a blood thinning medication.

Return to Work

You may return to work after 24 - 48 hours depending on the type of work you do. You may need to be off for a week if your work involves continuous standing. Please discuss this with your doctor or nurse on discharge and a medical cert can be provided.

Washing and showering

You should be able to have a shower after 48 hours. Don't worry about getting your wounds wet - just ensure that you pat them dry with a clean towel or let them dry in the air. You may wish to cover the steri-strips with a waterproof dressing prior to showering. Keeping wounds clean and dry helps healing.

In the Case of an Emergency

If you experience any of the following symptoms after your procedure, you should seek help from us via my secretary and if not available, the hospital's surgical day ward.

- Breathlessness, shortness of breath or chest pain (attend an emergency department)
- Painful, red, swollen leg
- Excessive bleeding
- Wound appears red, inflamed or there is pus or a discharge
- Fever

If you are not able to make contact through the numbers provided below, please attend your GP or Emergency Department.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns following your procedure, please contact us:

Prof Denis Harkin

t: 01 806 5644 **e:** dharkinrooms@bonsecours.ie

Secretary: Margaret Boyle

In the event you are unable to contact us on the above number, please call the surgical day ward at the Bon Secours Hospital Dublin on **t:** 01 806 5334

Out of hours, please contact the main hospital reception on **t:** 01 806 5300

