

Spider Veins



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Venulectasias

What is this condition?

Spider veins are also known as telangiectasia or thread veins. They are small, flat, red to blue veins on the surface of the skin (0.1–1 mm in diameter). Venulectasias are slightly larger, often 1–2 mm in diameter, blue-to-violet-coloured and sometimes distended above the skin surface. Reticular veins are 2–4 mm in diameter and have a cyanotic blue to blue–green colour.

How common is it?

Up to 80% of the population will develop spider veins or reticular veins. They tend to run in families, are more common with age, and develop more commonly during times of hormonal change.

What causes this?

Spider veins can occur spontaneously or may arise due to reverse pressure from larger downstream reticular veins which lie slightly deeper under the surface. Reticular veins are also called "feeder veins" as they tend to feed into the spider veins.

What are the symptoms?

The treatment of telangiectasias and reticular veins is most commonly performed for cosmetic improvement, but up to 50% of these patients also report a variety of symptoms, from dull aching legs to throbbing pain over the telangiectasia. Spider veins usually do not progress to the big varicose veins.



Can it be treated?

There is no absolute indication to treat these small veins. There are many ways to minimize their appearance including cover-up makeup and self tanning products. Avoid sunlight, exercise and maintain a healthy weight.

Spider veins and reticular veins are treated after causes of increased pressure in the bigger veins like malfunctioning valves have been excluded or treated.

Sclerotherapy is most commonly used to treat spider veins, venulectasias and reticular veins. An irritating solution is injected into the vein to cause them to block off. Over time the spider vein or reticular vein fades away. It is important to address the underlying feeder vein, otherwise treatment can result in a complication called matting or early recurrence.

Laser is also used, but it is limited to very small telangiectasia

How successful is treatment?

Treatment usually requires multiple sessions and it is almost impossible to achieve a perfect result. An approximately 70% improvement can be expected after 3 treatment sessions

Treating the spider veins does not prevent other spider veins from developing

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