

Endovenous Thermal Ablation Varicose Vein Treatment

Using ultrasound, we diagnosed Susan with venous reflux disease of her right great saphenous vein in the leg. For 5 years, she has suffered from aching pain, heaviness, varicose veins and swelling of her right leg. To treat this disease, I performed endovenous radiofrequency ablation of Susan's refluxing vein in the office. Susan was amazed how minimal her discomfort was during the procedure. She was also happy that she was able to go back to work the same day. In the 1980s she had a "vein stripping" procedure of the left great saphenous vein for similar symptoms – she remembers significant pain, bruising and being hospitalized for 2 days.

Endovenous thermal ablation can be performed with either laser (light) energy or radiofrequency (microwave) energy. Both forms of energy heat the reflexing vein wall, and by doing so, closes the damaged vein. After the vein is treated, blood no longer flows through the vein in either direction. The blood that would have traveled through this vein, now is re-routed through many collateral veins to the deep veins, which carry the blood back to the heart.

Ultrasound is used throughout the procedure, which is performed in the office using tumescent anesthesia. Tumescent anesthesia involves placing a dilute lidocaine solution around the area of the vein to be treated. Under direct ultrasound guidance, a small needle is used to place the anesthetic to the correct location. After the catheter is positioned, and the tumescent anesthesia is administered, the energy is carefully delivered to the vein to close the vein using either radiofrequency or laser heat energy. This heat energy

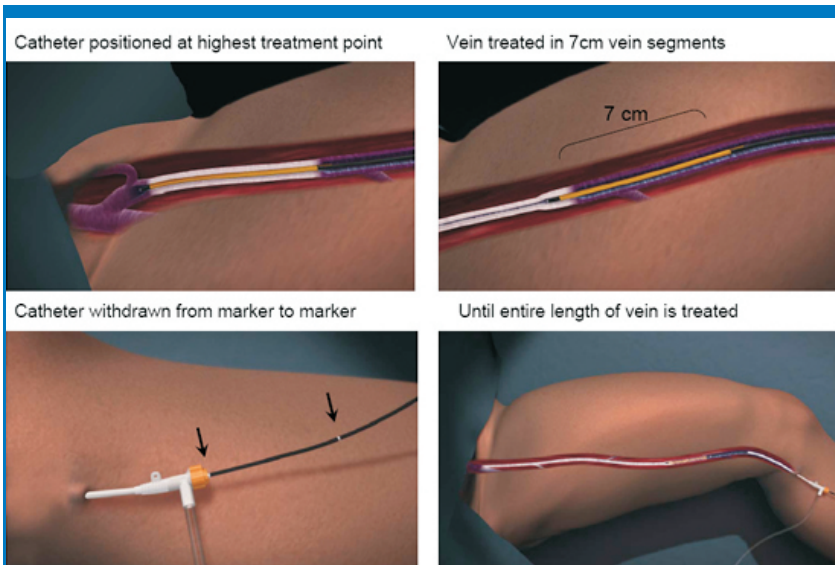
permanently damages the vein wall, so that it remains closed.

A small dressing is placed over the catheter insertion site, and graduated compression stockings are worn for 7 days. During the first postoperative day, these stockings are worn for 24 hours. For the next 6 days, these same stockings are worn during the day, when not sleeping. These stockings are usually panty-hose style, and are measured to specially fit each patient. Most patients do not complain about the procedure, but do complain about having to wear these stockings, because they are quite tight - but they are important because they minimize bleeding and blood clot formation after the procedure. After the procedure, two follow up ultrasound examinations are performed. The first is performed about 1 week after the

procedure and the second is performed about 6 weeks after the procedure. This procedure was FDA approved in 1999, and has revolutionized vein care.

Visit our web site to review our past articles on "The Truth About Varicose Veins," "Venous Reflux Disease," "Causes of Vein Diseases" and "Ultrasound Diagnosis of Vein Disease." Click the "Newspaper Patient Education Link," on the top of the page.

Stephen J. Hopkins, MD, FACS



VNUS Closure Procedure

For a personal consultation with Dr. Hopkins call 532-5528 to make an appointment. Dr. Hopkins is a General Surgeon, Certified by the American Board of Surgery, and a Phlebologist, Certified by the American Board of Phlebology.

The Mother Lode Vein Institute has offices in Jackson (256-9499) and Sonora (532-5528)

MotherLodeVeinInstitute.com

