Varicose veins in the legs

Information for the public
Published: 1 August 2014
nice.org.uk

About this information

NICE quality standards help to improve key areas of health or social care so that people are offered the best care available.

This information explains the care and support described in NICE quality standard 67 on varicose veins in the legs.

Varicose veins in the legs

The quality standard for varicose veins in the legs is made up of 3 statements that describe high-quality care for people with varicose veins in the legs. These statements set out the quality of care you should receive.

1. People with varicose veins that are causing symptoms (for example pain, aching, discomfort, swelling, heaviness and itching) or problems such as bleeding, eczema or leg ulcers are referred to a vascular service (a team of healthcare professionals who have training and experience in diagnosing and treating varicose veins).

2. People with varicose veins who have been referred to a vascular service have a duplex ultrasound scan (a scan that uses high-frequency sound waves to produce a picture of the veins). The scan shows the blood flow and helps the vascular service team locate any damaged valves that might be causing the varicose veins.
3. People with varicose veins caused by problems with the blood flow in the leg are offered treatment with:

- endothermal ablation (in which the veins are closed off using heat)
- or, if endothermal ablation is unsuitable, a treatment called ultrasound-guided foam sclerotherapy (in which the veins are closed off using a chemical foam)
- or, if both endothermal ablation and ultrasound-guided foam sclerotherapy are unsuitable, surgery to remove the varicose veins.

They should only be offered compression hosiery (stockings designed to improve blood flow by squeezing the legs) as a permanent treatment if none of the other treatments are suitable for them.

Your care

Your healthcare team should explain any treatment, care or support you should be offered so that you can decide together what is best for you. NICE has also produced advice and quality standards on improving the experience of care for adults using the NHS which you might like to read.

We also have more information on the NICE website about using health and social care services.

More information on varicose veins in the legs

NICE has also produced guidance (advice) on varicose veins in the legs. The guidance was used to develop this quality standard.

Sources of advice and support for people with varicose veins in the legs, their families and carers

- Circulation Foundation, 020 7869 6938
  www.circulationfoundation.org.uk

You can also go to NHS Choices for more information about health and social care.

NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.
A number of organisations who share NICE's commitment to improving quality in this area formally support this quality standard. They may also be able to provide advice and support. For a list of these organisations see the varicose veins in the legs quality standard on the NICE website.

ISBN: 978-1-4731-0687-1

Accreditation

Health & care information you can trust

The Information Standard Certified Member