

## Plymouth Nuffield Hospital

### Thread Vein and Microvein Removal using IPL (Intense Pulsed Light)

- Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) is a very effective treatment for removal of thread veins, spider veins, flare veins and microveins. IPL is the ideal treatment for facial veins and telangectasias, as well as veins in other sensitive areas of the body where traditional micro-injection sclerotherapy (micro-sclerotherapy) cannot be used. IPL can also be used to treat spider veins on the legs which are too small for micro-sclerotherapy. The optimal treatment for larger thread veins on the legs is micro-sclerotherapy, and IPL is not a substitute for micro-sclerotherapy in the treatment of these larger vessels.
- The other benefit of IPL treatment on the face is that it may have a rejuvenating effect on the skin due to stimulation of collagen, which can make the skin thicker and stronger and more resistant to further environmental damage.
- **How does IPL treatment work?** Intense Pulsed Light consists of a machine containing a flash lamp which emits pulses of extremely bright white light. The wavelength of the light emitted is optimised for absorption by blood vessels in the skin, yet at the same time minimising trauma to the surrounding skin. The light energy is absorbed by the blood within the vessels, resulting in heat generation which coagulates and destroys the vessels. Once damaged, the vessels are reabsorbed by the body which improves the appearance of the skin.
- IPL is also used for hair removal. IPL differs from laser in that it is able to treat larger areas of veins while causing less damage to the surrounding skin.
- **What does the treatment involve?** IPL treatment is most beneficial in people with pale skin and, ideally, you should avoid sun exposure before and during your course of treatment.
- At your first visit, the pros and cons of treatment will be discussed, and a patch test will be performed to check the reaction of your skin. You will be able to commence treatment about a week later. During treatment you will be asked to wear goggles to protect your eyes. When the light is emitted, there is a sharp sensation similar to a hot pin-prick or a rubber band being snapped at your skin. Most patients find the treatment quite tolerable. There will be a feeling of heat during the treatment, and the area of skin treated will be redder for a short while afterwards. Cooling packs and gels may be used. The redness usually resolves about an hour after treatment, although in some circumstances it may last for a few hours. If the area of skin treated is hair bearing, then IPL will result in hair loss.
- The coagulated blood within the veins may cause some pigmentation or bruising, which usually disappears after a few days. Sometimes crusting or, very occasionally, blistering may occur. The veins will gradually disperse after each treatment, over a two to four week period. Ideally, sun exposure should be avoided for four weeks before the treatment and throughout the course of treatment. After treatment, the skin should be protected against the sun by wearing an SPF 30 for a minimum of one month.
- **How many treatments will I need?** This will depend on the extent and severity of your veins, and the area to be treated. A reduction in visible lesions is normally noticeable after two treatments. Most patients will require several treatments to obtain the best cosmetic result, and the treatment interval is approximately three weeks.
- The details of your individual treatment programme will be discussed with you at your initial consultation.

## **Aftercare**

- It is important that the treated area is protected against the sun by wearing an SPF 30 for a minimum of one month after treatment. Following treatment of leg veins, patients should wear a light support stocking for a period of two weeks. Aspirin and other related medicines, as well as excessive alcohol, should not be taken for ten days after treatment, and pounding exercise should be avoided for the same time period.

## **Who should not have IPL treatment?**

- Patients with light sensitivities should avoid IPL treatment.
- Patients who are pregnant or breast feeding.
- Patients with a history of epilepsy or light-induced skin rashes.
- Patients with diabetes.
- Patients who are taking Roaccutane, or for twelve months afterwards
- Patients with a suntan

**Plymouth Nuffield Hospital**

**Simon Ashley MS FRCS  
Consultant Vascular Surgeon**

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**Contact telephone: 01752 707090**