

VNUS CLOSUREFAST, a patient's guide. - Shane MacSweeney

What is VNUS CLOSUREFAST?

The usual vein that needs to be treated is the vein which starts in the groin and runs down the inside of a leg to the ankle. The traditional method is to make a cut in the groin, tie the vein off, and strip the vein out. This involves incisions usually under general anaesthetic, works perfectly well but causes quite a lot of bruising and discomfort afterwards. The VNUS closurefast is a less invasive way of doing the same thing. It works by heating up the inside of the vein, this causes it to shrivel up and effectively does the same as stripping it but without the cuts or the bruising and with a much better recovery.

How is it done? (You may find looking at the diagrams or video clip on (www.veininfo.co.uk) helpful).

It can be done under general or a local anaesthetic and the local anaesthetic is described here. The vein to be treated is marked before the procedure and some local anaesthetic jelly is applied along the length of the vein to the skin. Alternatively small local anaesthetic injections may be put in the skin. The leg is then cleaned up with antiseptic solution and you will lie down on a sterile operating table. Everything will be cleaned and prepared as for an ordinary operation.

The first part of the procedure is that a small tube is inserted into the vein usually just below the knee. The catheter which is used to do the procedure is then passed through the tube, up the inside of the vein, as far as the groin. An ultrasound scanner is used to check the position to make sure the whole length of the vein is treated but that no areas of vein that do not need treatment are affected. The next stage of the procedure is to insert lots of local anaesthetic all around the vein. This is the part of the procedure that usually takes the longest, and may be slightly uncomfortable because a needle is used to insert the fluid around the vein, the local anaesthetic jelly will usually take the edge off this but does not always stop it completely.

Once all the local anaesthetic is inserted and the scan shows that everything is positioned correctly, the treatment will start. You will hear a beeping noise coming from the generator and this indicates the catheter is being heated up and it is this that shrivels the vein away. Most of the time people do not notice anything when the treatment starts and are often quite surprised when you tell them that the treatment has begun but occasionally people notice a slight discomfort when this occurs. If it is

uncomfortable, let the surgeon know and he will stop the treatment and put a bit more local around it if necessary. The vein is treated one segment at a time, the catheter being withdrawn in stages as each section of the vein is treated. When the segment to be treated is complete, the catheter is removed. Sometimes some small nicks are made over branches arising from the main vein again under local anaesthetic and these are removed as well. The leg will normally be bandaged and then a stocking placed over this. You are normally able to get up and walk off the operating table and go home shortly afterwards.

What do I do after the operation?

If all you have is the vnus closurefast treatment then there will be no incision as such, just a small mark where the catheter was inserted. If you have had some branch veins removed as well, then there will be some small nicks over these but these nicks are too small to require any stitches. Usually people find that they have very little discomfort afterwards. However you may notice that there is slight discomfort when the local anaesthetic wears off and if so takes painkillers such as Ibuprofen (e.g. nurofen) and Paracetamol. You are free to do whatever you feel comfortable with following the procedure, but it would seem sensible to take it reasonably gently at least for the rest of the day and overnight. On the following morning you can take this stocking off, remove the bandage and then put the stocking back on again. You should wear the stocking for two weeks following the procedure day and night but can take it off for 10 minutes or so to have shower as needed. You can undertake whatever activities you feel comfortable with. As far as driving is concerned if you can do an emergency stop/change gear safely, you are free to go back to drive. You may notice a little bruising around the area where the catheter is inserted and sometimes you may feel some tenderness and tingling along the inside of the thigh where the main vein has been treated. This will settle over time and need not cause concern. If you have had some branch veins removed you may get some bruising around these. If you have had a large number of big veins treated there may be a fair bit of bruising but like any bruise it will disappear as time goes by. Once everything has settled the appearance of the leg is normally excellent.