My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

VASCULAR SURGERY – Varicose Vein Surgery

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written in consultation with clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Guidance for Patients

While you are waiting for your varicose vein surgery there are some things that you can do to help alleviate any discomfort: These include:

- Using compression stockings (your specialist will have advised if these are suitable for you)
- Exercising regularly
- Avoiding standing up for long periods
- Elevating the affected leg when resting

While you are waiting for your operation it is also important to stay as healthy as you can both physically and mentally. That will help you get the best results in the long term. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this regularly reviewed at your GP surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment. Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker or drink heavily, it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping.

The NHS website has lots of tools and support to help with the above, all of which are good for your health generally, but if you are due to have an operation, they can also help you to recover more quickly from it.

For help and support with losing weight visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/

For advice on eating well visit: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/

For help and support with getting or keeping active visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/

For help and support with quitting smoking visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/

For help and support with drinking less alcohol visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/

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What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If your symptoms suddenly get significantly worse, you should contact your specialist or GP.

Should you experience any new episodes of unprovoked bleeding from varicose veins, apply pressure directly over the bleeding area and lie down with your leg supported as high as you can manage. This reverses any pressure in the bleeding vein and allows small clots to form, usually within 20-30 minutes to stem further bleeding. Apply a firm dressing before standing. If bleeding persists or recurs you should remain lying down and phone 999.

If you experience a sudden new and persistent pain in an area of varicose veins with swelling, heat and tenderness in the overlying skin, this could be as a result of a localised blood clot in a varicose vein (thrombophlebitis). Most episodes of thrombophlebitis settle over several weeks with the continued use of a compression stocking and an anti-inflammatory tablet. If you have no contraindication to its use, ibuprofen 400mg 3 times per day is an effective anti-inflammatory tablet. If there is significant swelling of the whole leg, the area of inflammation is not settling or spreading into new areas you should contact your GP for emergency review and advice.

If you have experienced a significant deterioration with new complications from your varicose veins, please contact your specialist with details of the deteriorating symptoms on the number below.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

Contact Us

VascularSecretaries@SomersetFT.nhs.uk

Vascular Secretarial phone numbers – 01823 343200/343102

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The content of this information has been reviewed and approved by the Surgical Board of Somerset NHS Foundation Trust