

Will Butcher – Vascular Surgery

Patient information

Post-operative instructions: Varicose veins

Pain killers - The pain of this operation is not severe, you should plan to take 2 paracetamol tablets every 6 hours for the first few days at least. You may like to take something stronger if necessary, also an anti-inflammatory drug like Ibuprofen is also appropriate. Most patients do not need much after the first four or five days are past

Dressings – If you have a wound in the groin (or behind the knee) it will have a sticky dressing on it. This should remain in place for five days or so. Once the wound is dry, no dressing is needed. In the beginning you will have a big bandage on your leg. Try not to disturb this too much. On the second or third day I will arrange to see you in the rooms to remove the bandage and supply a stocking(s). Your leg may have some blood stains on it or be a little brown from the skin cleaner we use in the operating theatre, this is quite normal. If some of the small cuts are bleeding, these can be treated with a simple sticking plaster. If there are some sticky dressings on the leg these can be left for now or removed if they are peeling off.

The wounds - If some of the small wounds bleed these can be treated with a small sticking plaster under the stocking. If the groin wound bleeds, this usually means that there is some old blood that is trying to get out. If it is minor, try not to worry about it, if it is more troublesome or prolonged you may need to come along to the hospital or go to your GP for help. The scars will look purple or red at first and will fade to a neat white colour over 4-6 months.

Sutures - Most patients will have dissolving stitches that do not need to be removed.

Washing – It will not really be possible to wash properly for the first two days. When the dressings are first removed, it is quite usual for there to be some residue of blood and the antiseptic solution left on your leg after the surgery, this can be gently washed. After three days the bandage will be removed so you can have a shower. Pat the wounds dry afterwards using an old towel as there may be some bleeding.

Bruising and lumpiness – At first the bruising may be a bit overwhelming, but bruising and some lumpiness is quite normal and should settle down over 4 to 8 weeks.

Mobilising - Although your leg(s) will be painful, you should be able to walk even on the day of your surgery. Regular short walks are better than long tiring walks. You should plan a regular walk every day, and keep as active as your discomfort allows. You should be back to normal mobility within a week or 10 days.

Work - Most people need 10 days to 2 weeks off work, it takes about 6 weeks for the leg(s) to feel completely normal again.

Driving: There are no particular rules about driving after this sort of surgery. In general, you should be able to safely depress the pedals and perform an emergency stop before starting to drive again. It is probably wise to go for a short safe drive with someone you trust before making the decision to start driving. If in doubt, check with your GP. Most people feel comfortable after about 1 week.

Stockings - After the dressings are removed, you will have a pair of stockings (or just one) to wear. You should wear these day and night for 5 days. After this wear them during the day only for another 3-4 weeks. If the bruising continues longer than this you may find the stockings help to reduce any discomfort caused by the bruising. They help to reduce bruising and oddly seem to be very effective at reducing pain after the surgery. Once a week or so has passed you will not really do any harm if you wish to not wear the stockings (they can be quite hot!), but you may find that the legs ache a bit. After showering make sure your legs are dry before applying the stocking. If the stockings are difficult to get on a simple plastic bag over the foot may help it to slide on. The bag should then be removed through the hole in the toe of the stocking.

